1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

to his own matriarchal stock, and at his death his bones are deposited in the cromlech of his mother's kin. In Jowai he neither lives nor eats in his wife's house, but visits it only after dark (p. 76). In the veneration of ancestors, which is the foundation of the tribal piety, the primal ancestress (*Ka Iāwbei*) and her brother are the only persons regarded. The flat memorial stones set up to perpetuate the memory of the dead are called after the woman who represents the clan (*māw kynthei*, p. 150), and the standing stones ranged behind them are dedicated to the male kinsmen on the mother's side.

In harmony with this scheme of ancestor worship, the other spirits to whom propitiation is offered are mainly female, though here male personages also figure (pp. 106—109). The powers of sickness and death are all female, and these are those most frequently worshipped (p. 107). The two protectors of the household are goddesses (p. 112), though with them is also revered the first father of the clan, *U Thāwlang*.

Priestesses assist at all sacrifices, and the male officiants are only their deputies (p. 121); in one important state, Khyrim, the High Priestess and actual head of the State is a woman, who combines in her person sacerdotal and regal functions (p. 70).

The Khasi language, so far as known, is the only member of the Mān-Khmēr family which possesses a grammatical gender, distinguishing all nouns as masculine and feminine; and here also the feminine nouns immensely preponderate (p. 206). The pronouns of the second (*mē*, *phā*) and third person (*ā*, *kā*) have separate forms for the sexes in the singular, but in the plural only one is used (*phī*, *kī*), and this is the plural form of the feminine singular.

It may perhaps be ascribed to the pre-eminence

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

342 Syntengs plaster the space in front of the house with red earth and cow-dung, this custom being probably a remnant of Hindu influences. The Khasis have some peculiar customs when they build a new house. When the house is completed they perform a ceremony, *kynjoh-hka-skain*, when they tie three pieces of dried fish to the ridge pole of the house and then jump up and try to pull them down again. Or they kill a pig, cut a piece of the flesh with the skin attached, and fix it to the ridge pole, and then endeavour to dislodge it. The Syntengs at Nartiang worship *U Biskurom* (Biswakarma) and *Ka Siem Synshar* when a house is completed, two fowls being sacrificed, one to the former, the other to the latter. The feathers of the fowls are affixed to the centre post of the house, which must be of *u dieng sning*, a variety of the Khasi oak. The worship of a Hindu god (Biswakarma), the architect of the Hindu gods, alongside the Khasi deity *Ka Siem Synshar*, is interesting, and may be explained by the fact that Nartiang was at one time the summer capital of the kings of Jaintia, who were Hindus latterly and disseminated Hindu customs largely amongst the Syntengs. Mr. Rita says that amongst the Syntengs, a house, the walls of which have been plastered with mud, is a sign that the householder has an enemy. The plastering no doubt is executed as a preventive of fire, arson in these hills being a common form of revenge.

776 177 342 627 342

342 Amongst the Khasis, when a daughter leaves her mother's house and builds a house in the mother's compound, it is considered *sang*, or taboo, for the daughter's house to be built on the right-hand side of the mother's house, it should be built either on the left hand or at the back of the mother's house.

776 793 In Nongstoin it is customary to worship a deity called *u'bei lap* (Khasi, *u phan*), by nailing up branches of the Khasi oak, interspersed with jaw-bones of cattle and the feathers of fowls, to the principal post, which must be of *u dieng sning*. The Siem priestess of the Nongkrem State at Smit and the ladies of the Siem family perform a ceremonial dance before a large post of oak in the midst of the Siem priestesses' house on the occasion of the annual goat-killing ceremony. This oak post is furnished according to custom by the *lyngskor*

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

or official spokesman of the Siem's Durbar. Another post of oak in this house is furnished by the people of the State.

The houses of the well-to-do Khasis of the present day in Mawkhar and Cherrapunji are built after the modern style with iron roofs, chimneys, glass windows and doors. In Jowai the well-to-do traders have excellent houses of the European pattern, which are as comfortable as many of the European subordinates' quarters in Shillong. Some up-to-date families in Shillong and at Cherra allow themselves muslin curtains and European furniture.

The houses of the Pnar-Wárs are peculiar. The roof, which is thatched with the leaves of a palm called *u tynriew*, is hog-backed and the eaves come down almost to the ground. There are three rooms in the Wár as in the Khasi house, although called by different names in the Wár dialect. The hearth is in the centre room. The houses are built flush with the ground and are made of bamboos. In the Wár villages of Nongjri and Umniuh there are small houses erected in the compounds of the ordinary dwelling-houses called *ieng ksuid* (spirit houses). In these houses offerings to the spirits of departed family ancestors are placed at intervals, this practice being very similar to the more ancient form of Shintoism. In some Wár villages there are also separate bachelors' quarters. This custom is in accordance with that of the Naga tribes. There is no such custom amongst the Khasi Uplanders. The Wár houses are similar to those of the Pnar Wárs, except that a portion of the house is generally built on a platform, the main house resting on the hill-side and the portion on the platform projecting therefrom, the object being to obtain more space, the area for houses in the village sites being often limited owing to the steepness of the hill-sides.

The Bhoi and Lynngam houses are practically similar, and may be described together. They are generally built on fairly high platforms of bamboo, are frequently 30 to 40 ft. in length, and are divided into various compartments in order to suit the needs of the family. The hearth, which is of earth, is in the centre room. There is a platform at the back of the Lynngam house, and in front of the Bhoi house, used for drying paddy, spreading chillies, &c., and for sitting on when the day's

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

work is done. In order to ascend to a Bhoi house, you have to climb up a notched pole. The Bhois sacrifice a he-goat and a fowl to *Rèk-ànglong* (Khasi, *Ramiew iing*), the household god, when they build a new house.

VILLAGES.

Unlike the Nagas and Kukis, the Khasis do not build their villages on the extreme summits of hills, but a little below the tops, generally in small depressions, in order to obtain some protection from the strong winds and storms which prevail in these hills at certain times of the year. According to the late U Jeebon Roy, it is *sang*, or taboo, to the Khasis to build a house on the last eminence of a range of hills, this custom having perhaps arisen owing to the necessity of locating villages with reference to their defence against an enemy. Khasis build their houses fairly close together, but not as close as houses in the Bhoi and Lynngam villages. Khasis seldom change the sites of their villages, to which they are very much attached, where, as a rule, the family tombs are standing and the *maiubynna* or memorial stones. In many villages stone cromlechs and memorial stones are to be seen which from their appearance show that the villages have been there for many generations. During the Jaintia rebellion the village of Jowai was almost entirely destroyed, but as soon as the rebellion was over the people returned to the old site and rebuilt their village. Similarly, after the earthquake, the ancient village sites were not abandoned in many cases, but the people rebuilt their houses in their former positions, although in Shillong and Cherrapunji they rebuilt the walls of the houses of wooden materials instead of stone. There is no such thing as a specially reserved area in the village for the Siem and the nobility, all the people, rich or poor, living together in one village, their houses being scattered about indiscriminately. To the democratic Khasi the idea of the Siem living apart from his people would be repugnant. In the vicinity of the Khasi village, often just below the brow of the hill to the leeward side, are to be seen dark woods of oak

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

and other trees. These are the sacred groves. Here the villagers worship *U ryngkew U basa*, the tutelary deity of the village. These groves are taboo, and it is an offence to cut trees therein for any purpose other than for performing funeral obsequies. The groves are generally not more than a few hundred yards away from the villages. The villages of the Syntengs are similar in character to those of the Khasis. The Wár villages nestle on the hill-sides of the southern border, and are to be seen peeping out from the green foliage with which the southern slopes are clad. In the vicinity of, and actually up to the houses, in the Wár villages, are to be observed large groves of areca-nut, often twined with the *pan* creeper, and of plantain trees, which much enhance the beauty of the scene. Looking at a Wár *village from a distance*, a darker *shade of* green is seen; this denotes the limits of the extensive groves where the justly celebrated Khasi orange is grown, which is the source of so much profit to these people. The houses in the Wár villages are generally closer together than those of the Khasis, probably owing to space being limited, and to the villages being located on the slopes of hills. Generally up the narrow village street, and from house to house, there are rough steep stone steps, the upper portion of a village being frequently situated at as high an elevation as 200 to 300 ft. above the lower. In a convenient spot in a Wár village a clear space is to be seen neatly swept and kept free from weeds, and surrounded with a stone wall, where the village tribunals sit, and the elders meet in solemn conclave. Dances also are held here on festive occasions. At Nongjri village there is a fine rubber tree, under whose hollow trunk there are certain sacred stones where the priest performs the village ceremonies.

The Bhoi and Lynngam villages are built in small clearings in the forest, the houses are close together and are built often in parallel lines, a fairly broad space being reserved between the lines of houses to serve as a street. One misses the pretty gardens of the Wár villages, for Bhois and Lynngams attempt nothing of the sort, probably because, unlike the Khasi, a Bhoi or Lynngam village never remains more than two or three years in one spot; generally the villages of these people are in the vicinity of the forest clearings, sometimes actually in the midst

of them, more especially when the latter are situated in places where jungle is dense, and there is fear of attacks from wild animals. In the Lynngam village is to be seen a high bamboo platform some 20 to 30 ft. from the ground, built in the midst of the village, where the elders sit and gossip in the evening.

All the villages, Khasi, Wár, Lynngam and Bhoi, swarm with pigs, which run about the villages unchecked. The pigs feed on all kinds of filth, and in addition are fed upon the wort and spent wash of the brewings of country spirit, or rice beer, the latter being carefully collected and poured into wooden troughs. The pigs are of the usual black description seen in India. They thrive greatly in the Khasi villages, and frequently attain extreme obesity.

In the Khasi villages of the high plateaux are often nowadays potato gardens, the latter being carefully protected from the inroads of pigs, calves, and goats by dry dikes surmounted by hedges.

I noticed an interesting custom at a Bhoi village in Nongpoh of barricading the path leading to the village from the forest with bamboo palisading and bamboo *chevaux de frise* to keep out the demon of cholera. In the middle of the barricade there was a wooden door over which was nailed the skull of a monkey which had been sacrificed to this demon, which is, as amongst the Syntengs, called *khlam*.

FURNITURE AND HOUSEHOLD UTENSILS.

As in the case of houses, so with reference to furniture, the influence of civilization shows many changes. The Khasi of the present day who lives in Mawkhar * has a comfortable house regularly divided up into rooms in the European style with even some European articles of furniture, but owing probably to the influence of the women, he still possesses several of the articles of furniture which are to be met with in the houses of those who still observe the old style of living. Let us take the furniture of the kitchen to begin with. Above the hearth is slung by ropes of cane a swinging wooden framework

* Mawkhar is a suburb of Shillong, the headquarters station.

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

231 about Rs. 30. The price of lac has risen a good deal of late
435 years. Formerly the price was about Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 a maund. The lac trade in the Jaintia Hills and in the southern portion of the Khyrim State is a valuable one. The profits, how-
426 ever, go largely to middle-men, who in the Jaintia Hills are Syntengs from Jowai, who give out advances to the Bhoi cultivators on the condition that they will be repaid in lac.
443 The Marwari merchants from the plains attend all the plains
439 markets which are frequented by the hill-men, and buy up the lac and export it to Calcutta. The whole of the lac is of the kind known as stick lac.

HUNTING.

224 The weapons used by the Khasis for hunting are bows and
[411] arrows, the latter with barbed iron heads, and spears which are used both for casting and thrusting. Before proceeding on a
[187] hunting expedition the hunters break eggs, in order to ascertain whether they will be successful or not, and to which jungle they should proceed. Offerings are also made to certain village
[176] deities, e.g. *U. Ryngkew*, *u Basa*, and *u Basa ki mrád*. A lucky day having been selected and the deities propitiated, the hunters start with a number of dogs trained to the chase, the latter being held on leashes by a party of men called *ki nong-ai-ksew*. When the dogs have picked up the scent some hunters are placed as "stops" (*ki ktem*), at points of vantage in the jungle, and the drive commences with loud shouts from the hunters, the same being continued until the object of the chase breaks into the open. The man who draws the first blood is called *u nongsiat*, and the second man who scores a hit *u nongban*. These two men get larger shares of the flesh than the others. The *nongsiat* obtains the lower half of the body of the animal, thighs and feet excepted, called *ka tdong*, and the *nongban* one of the forequarters called *ka tabla*. The other hunters obtain a string of flesh each, and each hound gets a string of flesh to itself. These hunting parties pursue deer
224 sometimes for many miles, and are indefatigable in the chase,
782 the latter lasting occasionally more than one day. In the Jaintia Hills, at the end of the chase, the quarry is carried to

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

the house of the *nongsiat*, where a *puja* is performed to some local deity, before the flesh is distributed. At Shangpung, when a tiger or a mithan is killed, the head is cut off, and is carried in triumph to a hill in the neighbourhood where there is a *duwan*, or altar, at the foot of an oak tree (*dieng sning*). The head is displayed on the altar, and worship offered to *u 'lei lyngdoh*, the God of the doloiship.

The Khasis make use of an ingenious species of spring gun for killing game, the spring gun being laid alongside a deer path in the jungle. A string stretched across the path, when touched, releases a bolt and spring, which latter impels a bamboo arrow with great force across the path. This spring gun is called *ka riam siat*. A pit-fall, with bamboo spikes at the bottom, is called *u 'liw lep*, and a trap of the pattern of the ordinary leopard trap is called *ka riam slung*. A noose attached to a long rope laid in a deer run is named *riam syrwiah*.

There is also *ka riam pap*, the principle of which is that an animal is attracted by a bait to walk on to a platform; the platform sinks under the weight of the animal, and a bolt is released which brings down a heavy roof from above weighted with stones, which crush the animal to death.

There are several means employed in snaring birds; one of the most common is to smear pieces of bamboo with the gum of the jack-tree, the former being tied to the branches of some wild fruit tree, upon which, when the fruit is ripe, the birds light and are caught by the bird lime. This is called *ka riam thit*. Another is a kind of spring bow made of bamboo which is laid on the ground in marshy places, such as are frequented by snipe and woodcock. This form of snare is unfortunately most common. A third is a cage into which birds are lured by means of a bait, the cage being hidden in the grass, and the entrance being so contrived that the birds can hop in but not out again. This is called *ka riam sim*.

FISHING.

Although there are some Khasis who fish with rod and line, it may be said that the national method of fishing is to poison

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

Khasi of the Uplands to marry a Bhoi or Wár woman, and a disgrace to marry a Lynngam. These divisions are sub-divided into a number of septs, taking Mr. Risley's definition of "sept" as being the largest exogamous division of the tribe. It will, however, be more convenient to speak of these septs as "clans," the word "clan" having been used in other parts of this Monograph and by other writers.

Many of the clans trace their descent from ancestresses or *kiaw* (grandmothers), who are styled *ki Iawbei-Tynrai*, lit. grandmothers of the root (i.e. the root of the tree of the clan). In some of the clans, the name of this ancestress survives; take as instances the Mylliem-ngap and Mylliem-pdah clans of the Khyrim State, the names of the ancestresses of the clans being *ka ngap* (honey, i.e. the sweet one), and *ka pdah* respectively. This tribal ancestress, as will be seen in the paragraph of the monograph dealing with ancestor-worship, is greatly reverenced, in fact, she may almost be said to be deified. The descendants of one ancestress of the clan, *Ka Iawbei Tynrai*, are called *shi kur* or one clan. We then come to the division of the *kpoh* or sub-clan, all the descendants of one great grandmother (*ka Iawbei Tymmen*), being styled *shi kpoh*. The next division is the *iing* (lit. house) or family. It is almost invariably the case that the grandmother, her daughters and the daughter's children, live together under one roof, the grandmother during her life-time being the head of the house. The grandmother is styled *ka Iawbei Khynraw*, or the young grandmother, to distinguish her from the other two grandmothers, *ka Iawbei-tynrai* and *ka Iawbei-tymmen* who have been mentioned above. The young grandmother, her daughters and their children are said to belong to *shi iing*, one house, the word *iing* in this instance possessing amongst the Khasis the same significance as the English word *family*.

We will now see how the Khasi clan (*kur* or *jaid*) grew out of the Khasi family (*iing*). Let us take the example of the great Diengdoh clan of Cherra. Disregarding the myth that the Diengdohs are descended from a mermaid, it may be stated that there seems to be a fairly general belief amongst the Diengdohs that their first ancestress or *kiaw* came from the

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

695 party to present a pig. The pig is supposed to be sacrificed
782 to a goddess, *Ka 'lei synshar*, i.e. the goddess of the State,
[776] but it is invariably eaten by the Siem and the members of the durbar. The Siem then calls out "*kumta mo khynraw*" (is it not so, young people?) The members of the durbar then reply, "*haoid kumta khein khynraw*" (yea, it is so, young
681 ones). Sentences of fine are more often resorted to than other
697 punishments nowadays, probably because very few of the Siems possess jails for the reception of criminals. The condemned one in a criminal case frequently serves his time by working for the Siem as a menial servant. The above description, which is based on the account given by the Rev. W. Lewis, with some modifications, may be taken as the usual form of procedure of the Khasi durbar.

682 Under the heading of decision of disputes we may perhaps
782 give a short description of some of the punishments which were inflicted by the Siems and their durbars in criminal cases in ancient times. Murder was punishable by beating the culprit to death with clubs (*ki tangon ki lymban*). The killing, however, of a *nong shoh noh*, i.e. a man who seeks for human victims to sacrifice to the monster, *u thlen*, is not considered murder, even now by the Khasis, and the slayer of the *nong shoh noh* only has to inform the Siem and deposit Rs. 5, and one pig in the Siem's court. The slaying of a robber also is dealt with in like manner.

684 The punishment of adultery was imprisonment for life (*ka sah dain mur*), or a fine of Rs. 1,100, and one pig (*ka khadwei spah wei doh*). Whether such a heavy fine was ever paid is perhaps doubtful, and probably some other form of punishment was substituted for it. A husband finding his wife and a man in *flagrante delicto* could, as under the law of the ancients, kill both adulterer and adulteress without punishment for murder. He was, however, bound to deposit Rs. 5, and the conventional pig in the Siem's durbar. The punishment for rape (*kaba khniot tynga*) was imprisonment for life in the case of the woman being married, and a heavy fine and one pig if the
685 woman was a spinster. Arson was punishable with imprison-
683 ment for life, or a heavy fine. The punishment for causing people to be possessed by devils (*ka ba ai-ksuid briew*) was

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

invocation. *U klong* is then made over to the judge (the Siem or the Sirdar as the case may be, &c.).

The person who undergoes the above ordeal wins the case, the production of evidence being unnecessary.

WAR.

Although the Khasis, unlike the Nagas, the Garos, the wild Was of Burma, the Dayaks of Borneo, and other head-hunting tribes, cannot be said to have indulged in head-hunting in ancient times, as far as we know, merely for the sake of collecting heads as trophies, there seems to be some reference to a custom of head-hunting in a description of the worship of the god *u Syngkai Bámon*, one of the principal gods of war amongst the Khasis. This god is described in one of the folk tales (I have obtained it through the kindness of Dr. Roberts, the Welsh missionary at Cherrapunji) as being the deity who gives the heads of the enemy to the successful warriors. To this god, as well as to *Ka Rám Shandi*, they offer a cock. Before sacrifice the warriors dance round an altar, upon which are placed a plume of cock's feathers (*u thuia*), a sword, a shield, a bow, an arrow, a quiver, *pán* leaves, and flowers. After the cock has been sacrificed, they fix its head on the point of a sword and shout three times. The fixing of the cock's head on the point of a sword is said to have been symbolical of the fixing of the human head of an enemy killed in battle, on the top of the *soh-lang* tree. Mr. Shadwell, of Cherrapunji, whose memory carries him back to the time when the British first occupied the Khasi Hills, has a recollection of a Khasi dance at Cherra, round an altar, upon which the heads of some *Dykhars*, or plains people, killed in a frontier raid had been placed. The Khasis used to sacrifice to a number of other gods also for success in battle. An interesting feature of the ancient combats between the people of different Siemships was the challenge. When the respective armies had arrived at a little distance from one another, they used to stop to hear each other shout the *'lien-Blei*, or challenge, to the other side. This custom was called *pyrta 'lien-Blei*, or shouting out the

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

[41] challenge. From the records available of the military operations of the Khasis against the British, the former appear to have relied principally on bows and arrows, ambushes and surprises, when they fought against us at the time of our first occupation of the hills. During the Jaintia rebellion firearms were used, to some extent, by the Syntengs. The military records do not, however, disclose any peculiar battle customs as having been prevalent amongst those hill people then. Both Khasis and Syntengs seem to have fought much in the same manner as other savage hill-men have fought against a foe armed with superior weapons.

HUMAN SACRIFICES.

The Thlen Superstition.

There is a superstition among the Khasis concerning a *thlen*, a gigantic snake which requires to be appeased by the sacrifice of human victims, and for whose sake murders have even in fairly recent times been committed. The following account, the substance of which appeared in the *Assam Gazette*, in August, 1882, but to which considerable additions have been made, will illustrate this interesting superstition:—"The tradition is that there was once in a cave near Cherrapunji,* a gigantic snake, or *thlen*, who committed great havoc among men and animals. At last one man, bolder than his fellows, took with him a herd of goats, and set himself down by the cave, and offered them one by one to the *thlen*. By degrees the monster became friendly, and learnt to open his mouth at a word from the man, to receive the lump of flesh which was then thrown in. When confidence was thoroughly established, the man, acting under the advice of a god called *U Suid-noh*,† (who has as his abode a grove near Sohrarim),

* This cave is at Pomdalai, some five miles west of Cherrapunji, close to a great waterfall called *Noh Ka Likai*, i.e. the place where Ka Likai jumped down the precipice (for a full account of this story see Section V. of the monograph), where there is a large block of stone, with some cuts over it, known as *Dain Thlen*, i.e. the snake cutting (place).

† In another account it is said to have been U Suid-noh himself who did this.

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

having heated a lump of iron red hot in a furnace, induced the snake, at the usual signal, to open his mouth, and then threw in the red-hot lump, and so killed him. He proceeded to cut up the body, and sent pieces in every direction, with orders that the people were to eat them. Wherever the order was obeyed, the country became free of the *thlen*, but one small piece remained which no one would eat, and from this sprang a multitude of *thlens*, which infest the residents of Cherra and its neighbourhood. When a *thlen* takes up its abode in a family there is no means of getting rid of it, though it occasionally leaves of its own accord, and often follows family property that is given away or sold. The *thlen* attaches itself to property, and brings prosperity and wealth to the owners, but on the condition that it is supplied with blood. Its craving comes on at uncertain intervals, and manifests itself by sickness, by misadventure, or by increasing poverty befalling the family that owns the property. It can only be appeased by the murder of a human being." The murderer cuts off the tips of the hair of the victim with silver scissors, also the finger nails, and extracts from the nostril a little blood caught in a bamboo tube, and offers these to the *thlen*. The murderer, who is called *u nongshohnoh*, literally, "the beater," before he sets out on his unholy mission, drinks a special kind of liquor called, *ka 'iad tang-shi-snem* (literally, liquor which has been kept for a year). This liquor, it is thought, gives the murderer courage, and the power of selecting suitable victims for the *thlen*. The *nongshohnoh* then sets out armed with a short club, with which to slay the victim, hence his name *nongshohnoh*, i.e. one who beats; for it is forbidden to kill a victim on these occasions with any weapon made of iron, inasmuch as iron was the metal which proved fatal to the *thlen*. He also takes the pair of silver scissors above mentioned, a silver lancet to pierce the inside of the nostrils of the deceased, and a small bamboo or cylinder to receive the blood drawn therefrom. The *nongshohnoh* also provides himself with rice called "*u 'khaw tyndep*," i.e. rice mixed with turmeric after certain incantations have taken place. The murderer throws a little of this rice over his intended victim, the effect of which is to stupefy the

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

latter, who then falls an easy prey to the *nongkokmak*. It is not, however, always possible to kill the victim outright for various reasons, and then the *nongkokmak* resorts to the following subterfuge:—He cuts off a little of the hair, or the hem of the garment, of a victim, and offers these up to the *thlen*. The effect of cutting off the hair or the hem of the garment of a person by a *nongkokmak*, to offer up to the *thlen*, is disastrous to the unfortunate victim, who soon falls ill, and gradually wastes away and dies. The *nongkokmak* also sometimes contents himself with merely throwing stones at the victim, or with knocking at the door of his house at night, and then returns home, and, after invoking the *thlen*, informs the master that he has tried his best to secure him a prey, but has been unsuccessful. This is thought to appease the *thlen* for a time, but the demon does not remain inactive long, and soon manifests his displeasure for the failure of his keeper to supply him with human blood, by causing one of the latter's family to fall sick. The *thlen* has the power of reducing himself to the size of a thread, which renders it convenient for the *nong-ri thlen*, or *thlen* keeper, to place him for safety in an earthen pot, or in a basket which is kept in some secure place in the house. When the time for making an offering to the *thlen* comes, an hour is selected, generally at dead of night, costly cloths are spread on the floor of the house of the *thlen* keeper, all the doors are opened, and a brass plate is laid on the ground in which is deposited the blood, or the hair, or a piece of the cloth of the victim. All the family then gathers round, and an elderly member commences to beat a small drum, and invokes the *thlen*, saying, "*ko kni ko kpa* (oh, maternal uncle, father), come out, here is some food for you; we have done everything we could to satisfy you, and now we have been successful; give us thy blessing, that we may attain health and prosperity." The *thlen* then crawls out from its hiding-place and commences to expand, and when it has attained its full serpent shape, it comes near the plate and remains expectant. The spirit of the victim then appears, and stands on the plate, laughing. The *thlen* begins to swallow the figure, commencing at its feet, the victim laughing the while. By degrees the whole figure

I: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

is disposed of by the boa constrictor. If the spirit be that of a person from whom the hair, or a piece of his or her cloth, has been cut, directly the *thlen* has swallowed the spirit, the person expires. Many families in these hills are known, or suspected, to be keepers of a *thlen*, and are dreaded or avoided in consequence. This superstition is deep-rooted amongst these people, and even nowadays, in places like Shillong or Cherrapunji, Khasis are afraid to walk alone after dark, for fear of being attacked by a *ramphrah*. In order to drive away the *thlen* from a house or family all the money, ornaments, and property of that house or family must be thrown away, as is the case with persons possessed by the demon *Ka Tarah*, in the Jaintia Hills. None dare touch any of the property, for fear that the *thlen* should follow it. It is believed that a *thlen* can never enter the Siem's or chief's clan, or the Siem's house; it follows, therefore, that the property of the *thlen* keeper can be appropriated by the Siem. A Mohammedan servant, not long ago in Shillong, fell a victim to the charms of a Khasi girl, and went to live with her. He told the following story to one of his fellow-servants, which may be set down here to show that the *thlen* superstition is by no means dying out. In the course of his married life he came to know that the mother of his Khasi wife kept in the house what he called a *bhut* (devil). He asked his wife many, many times to allow him to see the *bhut*, but she was obdurate; however, after a long time, and after extracting many promises from him not to tell, she confided to him the secret, and took him to the corner of the house, and showed him a little box in which was coiled a tiny snake, like the hair spring of a watch. She passed her hands over it, and it grew in size, till at last it became a huge cobra, with hood erected. The husband, terrified, begged his wife to lay the spirit. She passed her hands down its body, and it gradually shrank within its box.

It may be stated that the greater number of the Khasis, especially in certain Siemships, viz. Cherra, Nongkrem, and Mylliem, still regard the *thlen*, and the persons who are thought to keep *thlens*, with the very greatest awe, and that they will not utter even the names of the latter for fear some ill may befall

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

them. The superstition is probably of very ancient origin, and it is possible that the Khasi sacrifices to the *thlen* demon may be connected with the primæval serpent-worship which characterized the Cambodians, which Forbes says was "undoubtedly the earliest religion of the Mons." But it must be remembered that snake-worship is of very ancient origin, not only in Further India, but also in the nearer peninsula, where the serpent race or Nagas, who may have given their name to the town of Nagpur, were long held in superstitious reverence. Mr. Gait, in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol. i. of 1898, gives some account of the human sacrifices of the Jaintias or Syntengs. He writes as follows:—

"It appears that human sacrifices were offered annually on the Sun'hi Jag in the month of Ashwin (Sukla paksha) at the sacred *pitha*, in the Faljur pargana. They were also occasionally offered at the shrine of Jainteswari, at Nijpat, i.e. at Jaintiapur, the capital of the country. As stated in the *Haft Iqlim* to have been the case in Koch Behar, so also in Jaintia, persons frequently voluntarily came forward as victims. This they generally did by appearing before the Raja on the last day of Shravan, and declaring that the goddess had called them. After due inquiry, if the would-be victim, or *Bhoge khawa*, were deemed suitable, it was customary for the Raja to present him with a golden anklet, and to give him permission to live as he chose, and to do whatever he pleased, compensation for any damage done by him being paid from the royal treasury. But this enjoyment of these privileges was very short. On the Navami day of the Durga Puja, the *Bhoge khawa*, after bathing and purifying himself, was dressed in new attire, daubed with red sandal-wood and vermilion, and bedecked with garlands. Thus arrayed, the victim sat on a raised dais in front of the goddess, and spent some time in meditation (*japa*), and in uttering *mantras*. Having done this, he made a sign with his finger, and the executioner, after uttering the usual sacrificial *mantras*, cut off his head, which was placed before the goddess on a golden plate. The lungs were cooked and eaten by such *Kaudra Yogis* as were present, and it is said that the royal family partook of a small quantity of rice cooked in the blood of the victim. The ceremony was

usually witnessed by large crowds of spectators from all parts of the Jaintia pargánas.

"Sometimes the supply of voluntary victims fell short, or victims were needed for some special sacrifice promised in the event of some desired occurrence, such as the birth of a son, coming to pass. On such occasions, emissaries were sent to kidnap strangers from outside the Jaintia Raj, and it was this practice that eventually led to the annexation of the country by the British. In 1821, an attempt was made to kidnap a native of Sylhet proper, and while the agents employed were punished, the Raja was warned not to allow such an atrocity to occur again. Eleven years later, however, four British subjects were kidnapped in the Nowgong district, and taken to Jaintia. Three of them were actually sacrificed, but the fourth escaped, and reported the matter to the authorities. The Raja of Jaintia was called on to deliver up the culprits, but he failed to do so, and his dominions were in consequence annexed in 1835."[1]

There seems to be an idea generally prevalent that the Raja of Jaintia, owing to his conversion to Hinduism, and especially owing to his having become a devotee of the goddess Kali, took to sacrificing human victims; but I find that human victims were formerly sacrificed by the Jaintias to the Kopili River, which the Jaintias worshipped as a goddess. Two persons were sacrificed every year to the Kopili in the months *U' nairing* and *U' nai puh* (November and December). They were first taken to the *hat* Mawshai, or Shang-pung market, where they were allowed to take any eatables they wished. Then they were conducted to Sumer, and thence to Ka Iew Ksih, where a stone on the bank of a small river which falls into the Kopili is pointed out as having been the place where the victims were sacrificed to the Kopili river goddess. Others say that the sacrificial stone was situated on the bank of the Kopili River itself. A special clan in the Rallang dolaship used to carry out the executions. It seems probable that the practice of sacrificing human victims in Jaintia was of long standing, and was originally unconnected with Hinduism, although when the Royal family became converts to Hinduism, the goddess Kali may easily have taken the place of the Kopili

[1] Quoted from Sir W. Hunter's Statistical Account of Assam, vol. ii. p. 107

1:Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?

78 River goddess. Many of the Syntengs regard the River Kopili
78 to this day with superstitious reverence. Some of these people
123 will not cross the river at all, others can do so after having performed a sacrifice with grain and fowls. Any traveller who wishes to cross the river must leave behind him the rice which he has taken for the journey, and any other food supplies he may have brought with him. This superstition often results in serious inconvenience to travellers between the Jaintia Hills and North Cachar, unless they have arranged for another batch of coolies to meet them on the Cachar side of the River Kopili, for the Syntang coolies throw down their loads at the river side, and nothing will induce them to cross the river. The Kopili is propitiated by pujas in many parts of the Jaintia Hills, and at Nartiang a tank where sacrifices are regularly performed is called Ka U'mkoi Kopili.

SECTION IV.

RELIGION.

GENERAL CHARACTER OF POPULAR BELIEFS.

The Khasis have a vague belief in a God the Creator, U Blei Nongthaw, although this deity, owing, no doubt, to the influences of the matriarchate, is frequently given the attributes of the feminine gender, cf., Ka lei Synshar. The Khasis cannot, however, be said to worship the Supreme God, although it is true that they sometimes invoke him when sacrificing and in times of trouble. The religion of the Khasis may be described as animism or spirit-worship, or rather, the propitiation of spirits both good and evil on certain occasions, principally in times of trouble. The propitiation of these spirits is carried out either by priests (Iyngdohs), or by old men well versed in the arts of necromancy, and as the Iyngdoh or wise men deals with good as well as evil spirits, and, as often as not, with the good spirits of ancestors, the propitiation of these spirits may be said to partake of the nature of Shamanism. A very prominent feature of the Khasi beliefs is the propitiation of ancestors; but this will be described separately. There is a vague belief amongst the Khasis of a future state. It is believed that the spirits of the dead, whose funeral ceremonies have been duly performed, go to the house or garden of God, where there are graves of betel-nut trees; hence the expression for the departed, who have been to ding u bin (he who is eating betel-nut in God's house), the idea of supreme happiness to the Khasi being to eat betel-nut uninterruptedly. The spirits of those whose funeral ceremonies have not been duly performed are believed to take the forms of animals, birds, or

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

insects, and to roam on this earth: but this idea of transmigration of souls has been probably borrowed from the Hindus. Bivar writes that although the idea of a Godhead are not clearly grasped, yet a supreme creator is acknowledged, and that the following is the tradition relating to the creation of man. "God in the beginning having created man, placed him on the earth, but on returning to look at him, found he had been destroyed by the evil spirit. This happened a second time, whereupon the Deity created first a dog, then a man; and the dog, who kept watch, prevented the devil from destroying the man, and the work of the Deity was thus preserved." The Khasis, apparently, do not believe in punishment after death, at least there is no idea of hell, although the spirits of those who have died under the ban of *nang tynnain* enemy, being obliged to wander about the earth in different forms, as noted above. The spirits worshipped by the Khasis are many in number, those of the Syntengs being specially numerous. The particular spirit to be propitiated is ascertained by *egg-breaking*. The offering acceptable to the spirit is similarly ascertained and is then made. If the particular sacrifice does not produce the result desired, a fowl is sacrificed; the entrails being then examined, an augury is drawn, and the sacrifice begins afresh. As the process of *egg-breaking* is believed to be peculiar * to the Khasis amongst the Assam hill tribes, a separate description of it is given in the Appendix. It should be remarked that the Khasis never symbolize their gods by means of images, their worship being offered to the spirit only. The following are some of the principal spirits worshipped by the Khasis and Syntengs, omitting the spirits of deceased ancestors such as *Ka Iawbei*, a *Thoolong*, and a *Suidnia*, which will be described under the heading of ancestor-worship.

U Blei nadia—the god of the state, who is propitiated yearly by the sacrifice of a goat and a cock.

U Blei synshong—the god of water, used for drinking and cooking purposes. This god is similarly propitiated once a year, so that the water supply may remain pure.

* Sir Charles Lyall has pointed out that the Bhars possess this custom; it is probably borrowed from the Khasis.

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

U lei longspah—the god of wealth. This god is propitiated with a view to obtaining increased prosperity.

U Ryngkew, or *u Basa shnong*, is the tutelary deity of the village. This godling is propitiated by sacrifices whenever they are thought to be necessary.

U Phan u kyrpad is a similar godling to the above.

Then follows a list of minor deities, or, rather, evil spirits, e.g. *Ka Rik*, the malarial fever devil; *ka Khlam*, the demon of cholera; *ka Duba*, the fever devil which is said to haunt the neighbourhood of Theriaghat.

Rivar says "the Khasi religion may be thus briefly defined as forms used to cure diseases and to avert misfortunes, by ascertaining the name of the demon, as the author of the evil, and the kind of sacrifice necessary to appease it." We may accept this description as substantially correct. In the Jaintia Hills, there is a peculiar superstition regarding a she devil, called "*ka Tarah*," which is supposed to cause delirium in cases of fever. When such cases occur, it is believed that "*ka Tarah*" has caused them, and inquiries are made by means of breaking eggs to find out in whose person the demon has obtained a lodgment; or sometimes the sick person is asked to reveal this. When in either of these ways the name of the person possessed by "*ka Tarah*" is known, the sick person is taken to the house of the possessed, and ashes and bits of broken pots are cast into the enclosure, after which, if the sick person recovers, the party indicated is denounced as possessed by the demon; but if the patient dies, it is concluded that the person possessed has not been properly ascertained. If people are satisfied that some one is really possessed, they denounce the person, who is then cut-casted. The only way for him to regain his position is to exorcise the demon by divesting himself of all his property. He pulls down his house, burns the materials, his clothes, and all his other worldly goods. Lands, flocks, and herds are sold, the money realized by the sale being thrown away. No one dares touch this money, for fear he should become possessed by *ka Tarah*. It will be observed that, as in the case of the *thlen*, the demon is believed to follow the property.

Mr. Jenkins, in his interesting little work on "Life and

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

Mr. Jenkins, in his interesting little work on "Life and
753 Work in Khasia," gives a slightly different account of the
796 superstition, in that he states that it is the sick person who
826 is possessed by *ka Tarok*. The above belief is perhaps a
164 Synteng development of the Khasi *thlen* superstition. In
177 the Jaintia Hills "the small-pox" is believed to be a goddess, and is reverenced accordingly. Syntengs regard it as an honour to have had small-pox, calling the marks left by the disease the "kiss of the goddess"; the more violent the attack and the deeper the marks, the more highly honoured is the person affected. Mr. Jenkins says, "When the goddess has entered a house, and smitten any person or persons with this disease, a trough of clean water is placed outside the door, in order that every one before entering may wash their feet therein, the house being considered sacred." Mr. Rita mentions cases of women washing their hair in water used by a small-pox patient, in order that they may contract the disease, and women have been known actually to bring their little children into the house of a small-pox patient, in order that they may become infected and thus receive the kiss of the goddess. It is possible that the Syntengs, who were for some time under Hindu influences, may in their ignorance have adopted this degraded form of worship of the Hindu goddess, "Sitala Devi," who is adored as a divine mother under different names by Hindus all over India: cf., her name *mari-amman*, or mother of death, in the South of India, and the name Ai, mother, of the Assamese.

In the Khasi Hills the god of small-pox is known under the name of *u Sirm ziang thyllew*. He is not, however, appeased in any way, the people calling on two other spirits, *Thgneri* and *Sapa*, to whom a fowl or a goat is offered.

This section cannot be closed without some reference to the
778 household gods of the Syntengs. The legend is that in ancient
779 times there came a woman "from the end of heaven to the borders of the country of *u Trok*" (the country of the plains people at a distance from the foot of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills). The name of the woman was Ka Talen, and she was accompanied by her children. She offered herself to *u Dkhar*, the plains man, as a household goddess, but he rejected her. She then went to the Khasis, who were ploughing their fields,

1: Gurdon E-4 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

and offered to help them with their cultivation. The Khasis also refused her, saying they were capable of managing their own cultivation, and at the same time told her to go to the country of the Bhois and Syntengs, i.e. the Jaintia Hills. Acting on this advice, she went to the village of Nongphyllud in the Jaintia Hills, where the people again turned a deaf ear to her. She proceeded to Mulagula village in Jaintia, at the foot of the Jaintia Hills, and ascended from thence to Rymbai, where she met a man who conducted her to the house of the Siem, who consented that she and her children should live with him. Ka Taben then apportioned to her children various duties in the house of the Siem as follows:—Ka Rasong was to look after the young unmarried folk, and was to supervise their daily labour and to prosper their trading operations at the markets. Next Ka Rasong was given a place at the foot of the king post, *trai riakot*, and her duty was to befriend young men in battle. Then came *Ka Longkhuinruid*, alias *ka Thah-bulong*, who said, "There are no more rooms in the house for my occupation, so I will go and live in the forest, and him who turns not his coat when I meet him I will make mad." Finally came *U Lamsymphud*, who elected to live with his youngest sister inside the house.

There are special sacrifices offered to these household deities. The leaves of the *saing*, or Khasi oak, are wrapped round the post of the house, and a fowl is sacrificed and other formalities are observed which it would be tedious to describe in detail. The legend of the arrival of Ka Taben with her children in the Syntong country from a distant clime is interesting in that it perhaps indicates the possibility of the migration of these people, i.e. the Syntengs, in ancient times from some distant place to their present abode.

ANCESTOR-WORSHIP.

The Khasis not only revere the memories of deceased ancestors, but they adore them by means of offerings, which are sometimes periodical, and sometimes made when thought neces-

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

769 sary, as in times of trouble. These offerings take the shape of articles of food which are theoretically partaken of by the shades of the deceased ancestors, the idea of making such offerings being very similar to that of the Hindus when they offer the "*pinda*," or cake, to nine generations of ancestors, i.e. to propitiate the shades of the departed, and to obtain their help thereby. U Hormu Rai Diengdoh writes that, "the real religious demand" amongst the Khasis is the *ai bam*, or giving of food to the spirits of deceased ancestors, in order that the latter may aid the living members of the clan with their help, and bless them. To honour dead ancestors is the duty of every Khasi, and he who wilfully neglects this duty, it is believed, will neither receive their help, nor be defended from the influence of the numerous spirits of evil in which the Khasis believe. Amongst the Syntengs, a few days after depositing the bones in the ancestral tomb, the ceremony of feeding the spirits of the dead is performed. At this ceremony there are some families which give two pigs for each person of the family who is dead, and there are some who give one. The pigs are taken to the *iing-sang*, or puja house of the clan. Presumably, pigs are usually offered to the shades only of (211) these members of the family whose remains have been recently (764) deposited in the clan cromlech. In the chapter dealing with memorial stones the reader will notice how many of them are erected to the memory of deceased ancestors, and how they bear the names of such ancestors, e.g. *Ka Iawbei* (the first grandmother), *U Snidnia*, or *U kni rangbah* (the first maternal uncle). It was the custom in former days to make offerings of food upon the flat table-stones to the spirits of the deceased ancestors, and this is still the case in places in the interior of the district. This practice, however, may be said to be largely dying out, it being now commonly the custom to make the offerings in the house, either annually, or at times when it is thought necessary to invoke the aid of the departed. Such acts of devotion may well be said to partake of the 769 nature of worship. As has been the case in other countries, 171 and amongst other people, it is possible that the Khasi gods of 776 to-day are merely the spirits of glorified deceased ancestors transfigured, as has happened with some of the gods of the

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

Shinto Pantheon of Japan. It may be interesting to note that the ancient Shinto cult of Japan possesses some features in common with the ancestor-worship of the Khasis. Take the funeral ceremonies. With both people we find the dead laid out in the house, food placed before the corpse, and the funeral ceremonies taking place, accompanied by music and dancing. Mr. Lafcadio Hearn, in an interesting book on Japan, writes "that in ancient times the Japanese performed ceremonies at regular intervals at the tombs of deceased members of the family, and food and drink were then served to the spirits;" this is exactly what the Khasis used to do at their cenotaphs. This, apparently, was the practice in Japan before the "spirit tablet" had been introduced from China, when the worship of the ancestors was transferred from the tomb to the home. We have an exactly similar instance of evolution amongst the Khasis of the present day, i.e. the transfer of the ancestor cult from the flat table-stones erected in honour of deceased ancestors to the home. Last, but not least, is the idea common to both people, that no family or clan can prosper which does not duly perform the worship of deceased ancestors; this, as Hearn puts it, is "the fundamental idea underlying every persistent ancestor-worship, i.e. that the welfare of the living depends upon the welfare of the dead." The "Khasi Mynta," in an interesting article, notes some further points of resemblance between the methods of ancestor-worship adopted by the two people. The following instances may be quoted. Amongst the Japanese the spirits of those who fall in battle are said to help their fellow-warriors who are still fighting. The "Khasi Mynta" quotes a similar belief as having existed amongst the Khasis in former days. The remains of Japanese warriors who die in battle are said to be reverently taken to the warrior's home at the first opportunity. The Khasis do likewise, the clothing in default of the ashes of Khasi transport coolies, who were employed on military expeditions on the North-Eastern Frontier, having been carried home by the survivors to present to the dead men's relations, who then performed the ceremonies prescribed by custom for those who have died violent or unnatural deaths. Of all deceased ancestors the Khasis revere Ka *Iawbei* the most, the word *Iawbei* being made up of

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

'iaw, short for *kiaw* (grandmother), and *bei*, mother. *Ka Iawbei* is the primeval ancestress of the clan. She is to the Khasis what the "tribal mother" was to old Celtic and Teutonic genealogists, and we have an interesting parallel to the reverence of the Khasis for *Ka Iawbei* in the Celtic goddess Brigit, the tribal mother of the Brigantes. Later on, like Ka Iawbei, she was canonized, and became St. Bridget.*

The greater number of the flat table-stones we see in front of the standing monoliths in these hills are erected in honour of *Ka Iawbei*. In former times, it was the custom to offer food to her on these stones. In cases of family quarrels, or dissensions amongst the members of the same clan, which it is desired to bring to a peaceful settlement, it is customary to perform a sacrifice to the first mother, "*Ka Iawbei*." They first of all take an augury by breaking eggs, and if it appears from the broken egg-shells that *Ka Iawbei* is offended, they offer to her a cotton cloth, and sacrifice a hen. On these occasions incantations are muttered, and a small drum, called, "*Ka 'sing ding dong*," is beaten. It is not unlikely that the Khasi household deities, *Ka lei iing*, and *Ka ksaw ka jirngam*, to whom pujas are offered for the welfare of the house, are also *Ka Iawbei* in disguise. Notwithstanding the strong influence of the matriarchate, we find that *U Thawlang*, the first father and the husband of *Ka Iawbei*, is also revered. To him on occasions of domestic trouble a cock is sacrificed, and a *jymphong*, or sleeveless coat is offered. This puja is called *kaba tap Thawlang*, i.e. covering the grandfather. The following incantation to *U Thawlang* is then chanted:—

"Oh, father Thawlang, who hast enabled me to be born, who hast given me my stature and my life, I have wronged thee, oh father, be not offended, for I have given thee a pledge and a sign, i.e. a red and white sleeveless coat. Do not deliver me into the power of (the goddess of) illness, I have offered thee the propitiatory cock that thou mayest carry me in thine arms, and that I may be aware of thee, my father Thawlang."

We see clearly from the above prayer that the Khasi idea is that the spirit of the deceased male ancestor is capable of

* Karl Pearson's essay on "mother age civilization."

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

WORSHIP OF NATURAL FORCES AND OF DEITIES.

133 In the Khasi Hills, especially on the southern side, there are numerous rivers, sometimes of considerable size, which find their way to the Sylhet plains through very deep valleys, the rivers flowing through narrow channels flanked by beetling cliffs which rise to considerable altitudes. The scenery in the neighbourhood of these beautiful rivers is of the most romantic description, and the traveller might imagine himself in Switzerland were it not for the absence of the snowy ranges. Of such a description is the scenery on the banks of the river Kenchi-
823 yong, the Jálukáti * or Punatit of the plains. It is in the bed
776 of the river, a few miles below Rilang, that there is the
782 curiously-arched cavity in the rock which resembles an upturned boat which the Khasis call *Ka lieng blei* (the god's boat), and the plains people Baslanya's ship. Near to this, on the opposite side of the river, there is a rock bearing a Persian inscription, but so defaced by the action of the water as to be impossible to decipher. Like other inhabitants of mountainous countries, the Khasis reverence the spirits of fell and fall, and
226 propitiate them with offerings at stated times. A brief descrip-
782 tion of the ceremonies which are performed at Rilang, on the
776 occasion when the annual fishing in the river Punatit takes
787 place, may be of interest. The three Siems of Nongstoin, Langrin, and Nobosohpoh each sacrifice a goat to *Ka blei sam um* (the goddess of the river) before the boatmen can cast in their nets. In former times they say the passage up the river was obstructed by the goddess, who took the form of an immense crocodile: but she was propitiated by the gift of a goat, and the boatmen were then allowed to pass up the river in their boats. Hence it became necessary for the owners of the fishery to sacrifice annually a goat each to the goddess. At the time of my visit each Siem's party erected an altar in the bed of the river, in the midst of which a bough of the Khasi oak (*dieng suing*) was planted. The goats were then decapitated, it being considered an essential that the head

* Lit.: Cut by magic.

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

should be severed with one blow. As soon as the head was cut off there was a rush on the part of the sacrificers to see in which direction the head faced. If the head faced towards the north or west, it was considered an evil omen; if it faced towards the south or east, a good omen. The east is a lucky quarter amongst the Assamese also. The people ended up the proceedings by giving a long-drawn-out, deep-toned chant, or *kynhoi*. Immediately after the ceremony was concluded hundreds of boats shot out from the numerous creeks, where they had been lying, and fished the river all night, the result being an immense haul, to the delight of the Lynngams, who were seen next morning roasting the fish whole on bamboo stakes, after which they consumed them, the entrails being eaten with great gusto. Such is the worship of the goddess of the Punatit.

Similar pujas take place among the people of Wár-ding (the valley of fire) before they fish in the Khai-mara river and elsewhere in the Khasi Hills. In the Jaintia Hills there is the Synteng-worship of the Kopili river, which used to be accompanied by human sacrifices, as has been mentioned above, pp. 102-104. The Myntang river, a tributary of the Kopili, must also be annually appeased by the sacrifice of a he-goat. Numerous hills also are worshipped, or rather the spirits which are said to inhabit them. One of the best known hill godlings is the deity who is thought to inhabit the little wood close to the summit of the Shillong Peak. This deity is said to have been discovered by a man named "U Shillong," who gave his name to the Shillong Peak, and indirectly to our beautiful hill station. The Siems of Mylliem and Nongkrem reverence *U'lei Shillong*, and there are certain clans who perform periodical sacrifices to this god. Probably the origin of the superstitious reverence with which U'lei Shillong is held by the Siems of Nongkrem and Mylliem is that their fabled ancestress "Ka Pah Syntiew," of whom an account will be found in the folk-lore section, took her origin from a rock not far from the Shillong Peak in the Nongkrem direction.

Rableng Hill, which is within full view of the Shillong Peak in an easterly direction, is also said to be the abode of a minor god who is periodically propitiated by the members of the Máwthoh clan of the Khyrim State with a he-goat and a cock.

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

823 Apparently no special puja is performed to U Kyllang (the
776 Kyllang Rock) nowadays.

782 The picturesque hill of Symper, which rises abruptly from the plain in the Siemship of Maharam, is visible for many miles. It is in shape not unlike the Kyllang. Symper is said to be the abode of a god called "U Symper." There is a folk-tale [773] that Kyllang and Symper fought a great battle, and that the numerous holes in the rocks at the base of the Symper hill are evidences of their strife. At the base of Symper there is a great cave, where many cattle find shelter in rainy weather. The people of Mawsynram propitiate the god of Symper in cases of sickness by sacrificing a he-goat or a bull. Symper, like *U'lei Shillong*, is one of the minor deities of the Khasis.

Close to Shangpung, in the Jaintia Hills, there is a small hill called "*u lúm pyddieng blai lyngdoh*," where sacrifices are offered on an altar at seed time and when the corn comes into ear. This altar used to be overshadowed by a large oak tree. The tree is now dead.

823 The Wars of Nongjri worship "*u'lei lyngdoh*," the tutelary
776 deity of the village, under the spreading roots of a large rubber tree which gives its name to this village Nongjri. This village worship is performed by a village priest (*lyngdoh*) at stated intervals, or whenever it is considered necessary. There are numerous other instances of hills and rivers being regarded as the abode of godlings, but those quoted above are sufficient for purposes of illustration.

RELIGIOUS RITES AND SACRIFICES, DIVINATION.

776 The Khasis, as has been explained already, worship numerous
782 gods and goddesses. These gods and goddesses are supposed to
753 exercise good or evil influence over human beings according
787 to whether they are propitiated with sacrifices or not. They are even supposed to possess the power of life and death, over men and women, subject to the control of *u Blei Nongthár*, God the Creator. Thus illness, for example, is thought to be caused by one or more of the spirits on account of some act or omission, and health can only be

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

restored by the due propitiation of the offended spirits. 776
In order to ascertain which is the offended spirit, a system 782
of divination by means of cowries, breaking eggs, or 753
examining the entrails of animals and birds, was instituted. 787
The Khasi method of obtaining auguries by examining the viscera of animals and birds may be compared with that of the Roman *haruspex*. Some description of these modes of divination has been given at the end of this chapter. The 771
Khasi religion has been described by Bivar as "demon worship, 773
or a jumble of enchantments muttered by priests who are 783
sorcerers." But even a religion which is thus unflatteringly 825
described is based on the cardinal doctrines of sin and sacrifice for sin. Tradition amongst the Khasis states that in the beginning (*mynnyngkong ka sngi*) there was no sin, heaven and earth were near each other, and man had direct intercourse with God. How man fell into sin is not stated, but it is certain that he did fall. Experts at "egg healing" never forget to repeat the formula "*nga briéw nga la pop*" (I man have sinned). The cock then appears as a mediator between God and man. The cock is styled "*u khún ka blei uba kit ryndang ba shah ryndang na ka bynta jong nga u briéw*," i.e. the son of god who lays down his neck (life) for me man. The use of the feminine *ka blei* is no doubt due to matriarchal influences. There is another prayer in which the Khasis say, "*ap jutang me u blei ieng rangbah me u briéw*" (oh god do not forget the covenant, arise oh man). The idea is that man has fallen into sins of omission and commission (*ka pop, ka lait ka let*) but that God is nevertheless expected to spare him, and to accept a substitute for him according to the covenant (*jutang*). By this covenant God is supposed to have accepted in exchange the cock as a substitute for man. How the cock came to occupy such an 771
important position, tradition is vague and self-conflicting. The 825
fact remains that the covenant of the cock is the foundation 171
of the Khasi religion. It is of interest to mention that amongst the Ahoms the tradition is that Khunlung and Khunlái brought down from heaven the *kái-chán-mung*,* or pair of heavenly fowls, and that to this day the sacrifice of the

* In Ahom *kái* = fowl, *chán* = beautiful, *mung* = country. Therefore *Kái-chán-mung* = fowl of a beautiful country (heaven).

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

ing the usual spiritual offices. The duties of lyngdohs, their methods of sacrificing, and the gods to whom they sacrifice, vary in the different Siemships, but there is one point in which we find agreement everywhere, i.e. that the *lyngdoh* must be assisted at the time of performing sacrifices by a female priestess, called *ka soh-blei, ka soh-sla*, or simply *ka lyngdoh*. This female collects all the *puja* articles and places them ready to the *lyngdoh's* hand at the time of sacrifice. He merely acts as her deputy when sacrificing. The female *soh-blei* is without doubt a survival of the time when, under the matriarchate, the priestess was the agent for the performance of all religious ceremonies. Another such survival is the High Priestess of Nongkrem, who still has many religious duties to perform; not only so, but she is the actual head of the State in this Siemship, although she delegates her temporal powers to one of her sons or nephews, who thus becomes Siem. A similar survival of the ancient matriarchal religious system is the *Siem sad*, or priestess, at Mawsynram, who, on the appointment of a new Siem or chief, has to assist at certain sacrifices. Here we may compare Karl Pearson's remark, when dealing with matriarchal-customs, that "according to the evidence of Roman historians, not only the seers but the sacrificers among the early Teutons were women." The duties of the *lyngdohs*, as regards communal worship, consist chiefly of sacrificing at times of epidemics of cholera, and such-like visitations of sickness (*jing iap khlam*). In the Khyrim State there is a goddess of each *raj*, or division, of the state, to whom sacrifices are offered on such occasions. To the goddess are sacrificed a goat and hen, powdered rice (*u kpu*), and a gourd of fermented liquor; the leaves of the *dieng sning*, or Khasi oak, are also used at this ceremony. The *lyngdoh* is assisted by a priestess called *ka soh-sla*, who is his mother, or his sister, or niece, or some other maternal relation. It is the duty of the priestess to prepare all the sacrificial articles, and without her assistance the sacrifice cannot take place. Sacrifices are also performed by the *lyngdoh* to *u Lei Lyngdoh*, alias *u Ryngkew*. This used to be the tutelary deity in times of war, but in less troublous times the Khasi *lyngdoh* sacrifices to him for success in tribal or State litigation. A pig and a cock, with the usual accessories, are sacrificed by the

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

793 *lyngdoh* to this god. As in the case of sacrifices to *Ka lei*
776 *Raj*, the services of a priestess are indispensable.

A *lyngdoh* is a *lyngdoh* for life. When a lyngdoh dies and
793 his successor is appointed, certain rather elaborate ceremonies
535 are observed in the Nongkrem *raj* of the Khyrim State. The
782 funeral ceremonies of the old *lyngdoh* having been completed, the *lyngdoh* clan appoints his successor. The latter then, after performing his ablutions proceeds, accompanied by the assembled members of the *lyngdoh* clan, to the top of the Shillong Peak. The lyngdoh and his clansmen advance along the road dancing, this dancing being carried on all the way from the *lyngdoh's* house to the Shillong Peak. All are clad in the distinctive Khasi dancing dress. Having reached the Peak, they pick the leaves of a tree called *ka 'la phiah*, which they spread on the ground. A goat and a cock are then sacrificed, the new *lyngdoh* acting as the sacrificer. There are the usual accessories, including branches of the Khasi *sning* or oak. Nine portions (*dykhot*) are cut from different parts of the victims and are offered to the god of the Shillong Peak, *U lei Shillong*. The *lyngdoh* and his companions then perform obeisance three times to the god, and the lyngdoh walks backwards some paces. The puja is then over, and they return dancing to the lyngdoh's house. On another day the *lyngdoh* performs a puja to *u lei Lyngdoh*, alias *u Ramjah*. Undoubtedly the most interesting feature of the ceremonies on these occasions is the dancing. This dancing is carried out by the *lyngdoh* and his companions armed with sword and shield, a fly-flap made of goat's hair (*symphiah*) being also sometimes held in one hand, a quiver of arrows being slung on the back, and a plume of black and white cocks' feathers (*u thuya*) fixed in the turban. The dance is executed in a regular figure, the dancers advancing and retiring in an orderly and methodical manner, and finally clashing their swords together in mock combat. The dance of the present day is not unlikely the survival of a war dance of ancient times. The lyngdohs say they dance in honour of *U lei Lyngdoh*, to whom such dances are thought to be pleasing. The dance of the lyngdohs on these occasions may be compared with that of the Roman *salii*, who, in the month of March, performed a war dance in honour of Mars.

I. Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

The above and other similar sacrifices to the gods of the State divisions of the State may be said to be the communal ligious duties of the *lyngdohs*. The duties of *lyngdohs* with ference to private persons may now be mentioned. When it found that any two people have made an incestuous marriage, at is to say a marriage within the exogamous group of the r, or clan, the parties at fault are taken before the *lyngdoh* their clansmen, who request him to sacrifice in order to rd off the injurious effects of the *sang*, or taboo, of such a nnection from the kinsfolk. On this occasion a pig is rificed to *u'lei lyngdoh* and a goat to *ka lei long roj*. The rties at fault are then outcasted. As mentioned in another ce, the sin of incest admits of no expiation for the offenders mselves. In the Khyrim State, it is said by the *lyngdohs* mselves, although not by the Siem or the myntries, that y are the reversionary legatees of all the persons who without leaving female heirs (*iap duh*). In other Siem- ps such property passes to the Siem. The *lyngdoh* of Nong- m can also take possession of the property of persons who ve been found to harbour an evil spirit (*jingbih*) in their ses. It appears that in such cases the house and furniture burnt, as in the case of the *Tarok* superstition in the Jaintia ls, the *lyngdoh*, however, taking possession of jewellery or thing else of value. The only practical service the *lyngdoh* ders in return is to build the afflicted person a new house; ess, indeed, we take into account the casting forth of the il by the *lyngdoh*. Mr. Jenkins, of Shangpung, in the ntia Hills, writes: "Such is the belief of the people in the spirits, that they are completely under the influence of the sts and spend large sums of money in order to secure their our. They live in constant dread lest by the least transsion or omission they should offend these avaricious men so bring upon themselves the wrath of the demons." The uence of the *lyngdohs* over the people in the Jaintia Hills ms to be stronger than in the Khasi Hills. For instance, ame to my notice in Raliang that crops cannot be cut until *lyngdoh* has seen them, in other words, until the *lyngdoh* claimed and obtained his share of the produce. In many es, however, in the Khasi Hills the *lyngdoh* is much dis- d owing, no doubt, to the advance of Christian education.

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

hild are prohibited by custom from crossing a stream or wash- 846
g their clothes until the navel-string falls off, for fear that 787
he child should be attacked by the demons of the hills and the
ales.

The Wár birth customs are substantially the same as those 844
f the Khasis, but there is the difference that a Wár family 846
fter a birth is *sang*, or taboo, for seven days, whereas amongst
he Khasis the only prohibition is that the parents must not
ross a stream or wash their clothes until they have propitiated
he spirits. A twin birth is *sang*, or taboo. The Khasis argue 845
hat as there is but one *Ka Iaeiei* (first ancestress), and one 773
Thiarlang (first ancestor), so one child, either male or female,
hould be born at a time. A twin birth is accordingly regarded
s a visitation from God for some *sang*, or transgression, com-
itted by some member of the clan. When the twins are of
pposite sexes the *sang* is considered to be extremely serious,
he Khasi idea being that defilement has taken place within
he womb. The case is treated as one of *shong kur*, or marriage [766]
ithin the clan, and the bones of the twins cannot be placed in
he sepulchre of the clan.

There are no special birth customs amongst the Lyngams. 844
There is no trace of the *couvade* amongst the Khasis. 846

MARRIAGE.

We now come to consider marriage amongst the Khasis from 835
religious point of view. Shadwell has said that marriage 776
mongst the Khasis "is purely a civil contract." This state-
ent is not correct, for there is an elaborate religious ceremony
which tied the creator, *Ubri thaw briew mara briew*, the god
goddess of the State, *U or kaiei Synshar*, and, what is pro-
bly more important, the ancestress and ancestor of the clan,
Iaeiei-lyngam and *U Thawlang*, are invoked. There are
ree marriage ceremonies prevalent amongst the Khasis, which
re (a) *Pynkhreyajat*, (b) *Leandok*, and (c) *Iadiit-khiad*, respec-
vely. The first and second forms above mentioned are
onsidered the more respectable; the last-named is resorted to
by the very poor who cannot afford the greater expense entailed
by the first two ceremonies.

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

unless they have no female children, in which case the clan urges them to re-marry, so that the chain of inheritance may not be broken, inheritance amongst the Khasis always passing in the female line.

CUSTOMS IN CONNECTION WITH DEATHS BY VIOLENCE OR ACCIDENT.

These customs are interesting enough to deserve a separate description; they are as follows:—

If a man dies by the sword, before his body can be burnt, a sacrifice of a black hen must be offered to *Ka Tyrut*, the goddess of death. The bones are then placed in a stone cairn. Again they are removed, and, after eggs have been broken, are taken to a river bank and there washed. If there is no river at hand, a tank is dug for the purpose, which is called *wakhi*. There are various such *wakhis* in different parts of the district, e.g. near Raliang and Nartiang. A sacrifice of a goat is offered to the god *U Synghoi Bamon*, and a sow to *Ka Ramshandi*, both of whom are evil deities. Another sow is sacrificed to *Ka Tyrut*. After this the bones are placed in another newly-built cairn. The ceremony of placing the bones in one and then removing them to another cairn is usually performed three times; but unless the auspices, as deduced from the eggs, are favourable, the relatives must go on sacrificing and removing the bones until they are so. These ceremonies having been completed, they erect a flat table-stone, or *mawlyntkot*, for the ghost of the departed to sit upon, and return home, where they propitiate their ancestors with offerings of food. In the case of the murdered victims of the *thlen* superstition the same ceremonies are observed. For people who have died by drowning, or been killed by wild animals, and for women who have died in child-birth, similar pujas are offered, except that a sacrifice to *U Synghoi Bamon* does not take place. In the case of one who has died at a distance from his home, e.g. in a foreign country, whose body has not been burnt in accordance with custom, and whose bones have not been collected, the members of his clan, or his children, take three or five seeds or cowries (*shoi*) to a place where three roads meet. Here they summon the spirit of the departed in a loud voice,

I: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

the bones of males and females being kept in separate bundles wrapped in white cloth, two women of the clan reverently carrying them in their arms, holding the bundles of bones to their breasts. One female carries the bones of the males and the other those of the females. In front of these women walks an old man who scatters along the way leaves of the *diewp-shit* tree and grains of rice, and when it is necessary to cross any stream or river, he ties a thread from one side of the bank to the other, this is for the spirit of the departed to cross the water. Sometimes u'saw *lokrik*, a kind of long grass, is used instead of thread for the above purpose. On arrival at the clan puja-house, the bones of the males are laid on one bed and those of the females on another, the beds being bedecked with rich hangings. A cock, u'*iar kradlyuti* (lit.: "the cock which scratches the way"), is sacrificed, this sacrifice being considered by the Khasis to be of peculiar significance. A pig, a cock, and a bull are then sacrificed, and portions of the above are offered to the spirits of the deceased. These offerings are known by the name of *ai-kaw*, and are placed in a basket which is hung up in the house, together with the left thigh of the fowl and the lower jaw-bone of the bullock. A dance is performed that night, first in the house by two women, one belonging to the clan and the other an outsider, and afterwards in a specially prepared place outside the house called "*lympung*." The *shareti*, or flute, which is played at funerals is sounded, drums are beaten, and bombs are exploded. This dancing lasts from one to nine days, the limit being always an uneven number of days. At Cherra two effigies called *Ka Pyrsa* and *U Tyngshop* are prepared and dressed up; the former is intended to represent *Ka Iawbei*, the first ancestress, and the other *U Suidnia*, the first maternal uncle of the clan. These effigies are held in the hands of the dancers. In the meantime two lines of upright stones consisting of three each, with a table-stone in front of each line, have been set up. These are called *maw-ïjat* or *maw-lyuti*, and are intended to serve as resting-places for the spirits of the dead on their way to the tomb of the clan. These stones are generally not more than three feet in height, and must not be confounded with the larger stones or *maw-lynna*. On the night before it is proposed to deposit the

1:Gurdon E-4,5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

which a figure, evidently of a Hindu god, has been carved, without doubt after the erection of the stone. Here we have a striking parallel case to the painted and carved menhir near Tregastel in Brittany, upon which has been carved the representation of a crucifix. There are also some carved stones near Nartiang (said to represent two women) called *mawthawdur briew*.

The Khasis say that these great stones were brought sometimes from considerable distances. After being hewn, the stones were laid on a large, wooden trolley and dragged across country by means of ropes of cane, of which plenty can be had from the Wár country on the southern side of the district, and then placed in position by means of ropes and levers. It seems little short of marvellous that these stones, which sometimes weighed many tons, were placed in position by such primitive means, especially when we consider the great trouble there was to re-erect one of the fallen stones at Stonehenge lately. Nowadays only comparatively small stones are erected, which are generally hewn and erected on the spot, so that there is no necessity for any conveyance.

In conclusion, it may be remarked that the subject of the Khasi monoliths is in reality a large one, on which a great deal could be written, but owing to considerations of space it has been found necessary to compress the account within its present limits.

FESTIVITIES, DOMESTIC AND TRIBAL.

Dancing forms the principal part of all the Khasi festivities, and is an important adjunct of some of their religious ceremonies. One of the greatest festivals in the Khasi Hills is the Nongkrem dance; it may be said to be as important an event to the Khasis as the *Beh dieng-khlam* festivities are to the Syntengs.

The Nongkrem dance is really part of what is known as the *pom-blang*, or goat-killing ceremony, performed by the Siem of Khyrim (or Nongkrem) with the aid of his *soh-blei* (high priest) and the various *lyngdohs* (or priests) to Ka Blei Synshar (the ruling goddess), that the crops may prosper and that there may

I: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?

be a successful era in store for the people of the State. The goddess on this occasion may be regarded as a Khasi Demeter, although no mysteries form part of her services as at the Grecian Eleusis. The Nongkrem ceremony and dance (now held at Smit) take place in the late spring, generally in the month of May. A lucky day having been fixed, the Siem sends a ring of cane (*kyrwah*) by way of a summons to the people of every village in the State, at the same time informing them of the date of the puja, and requesting them to attend with their offerings, consisting of goats and different articles of food. In the meantime various pujas have been taking place in the house of *Ka Siem Sad*, the Siem priestess, which it would be tedious to describe in detail. The more interesting points only will be mentioned. A fortnight before the puja and dance at Smit the *sok-blei*, or high priest, pours out libations of liquor in the *kyrwa-blang*, or place where the sacrificial goats are kept, and in front of the great post (*ri diang ewing*, or Khasi oak), in the house of the Siem priestess. Dancing then takes place in front of the post. Later on the Siem, with the high priest and other attendant priests, walks with extremely slow gait to a small hill where a stone altar has been prepared, and sacrifices a cock in honour of *u'lei Shillong*, or the god of the Shillong Peak. A silver dish with powdered rice, liquor in a gourd (*ka'iad um*), betel-nut, and some leaves of the Khasi oak (*diang ewing*), are also necessary adjuncts of the puja. A goat is then sacrificed, and the sacrifice is followed by a dance of twenty-two men armed with swords and shields and chowries (fly-flaps). Having danced before the altar, the party returns to the house of the Siem priestess and executes another dance in the great courtyard. The Siem and certain selected persons dance in front of the *riehot blei*, or holy post of Khasi oak inside the house of the Siem priestess, the dancers being entertained with dried fish and ginger. Then follows the great dance of girls and men in front of her house. The girls dance in the centre, taking such tiny steps, that the lifting of their feet from the ground is hardly perceptible, the arms held down to the sides and the eyes demurely downcast. It is on this occasion that they wear the peculiar silver (and sometimes gold) crowns illustrated in the

It Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR? Khasi AR?

women from the West country, wearing their picturesque dress, amongst whom was the wife of the Siem of Bukwal with her little daughter. The dance was a pretty sight, and I have seldom seen such evidence of unalloyed happiness as was exhibited by the people on this occasion. Dancing may be described as one of the characteristic features of Khasi life.

The Synteng *Beh-dieng-khlam* festival takes place annually at *Jowai* and elsewhere in the Jaintia Hills in the deep water moon month (a *Pyllion*, or June). *Khlam* is the Khasi word for plague or pestilence, and *beh-dieng* signifies to drive away with sticks. The festival may be described as follows:—The males rise betimes on the day fixed and beat the roof with sticks, calling upon the plague-demon to leave the house. Having done this, later on in the day they go down to the stream where the goddess "Ailan" dwells. Then poles of great length, which have been newly cut, are held across the stream. The people jump on the poles and try to break them; when they succeed in doing so, a great shout is given. After all these poles have been broken, a very large pole is fixed across the stream. The people then divide themselves into two parties, and contend for the possession of the tree. The contest, however, is a good-humoured one, and although many buffets are given and received, these are not regarded seriously, and there are seldom any fights. Col. Rivett says the contending villagers, in their excitement, sometimes relapse into a state of almost complete nudity. The party which succeeds in obtaining possession of this post is supposed to gain health and prosperity during the coming year. Col. Rivett remarks that the origin of this so-called ceremony is said to be that the god of thunder "*Ubi pyrtiid*," and Ka Ailan, the goddess of the stream, enjoyed its performance. Many innovations, however, have crept in. People disguise themselves as giants and wild beasts, they also parade images of serpents, elephants, tigers, peacocks, &c. Dancing is carried on with enthusiasm by the males, the girls, clad in their best attire, remaining on lookers. Before the meeting breaks up the males play a sort of game of hockey with wooden balls.

539 (§33) mands a hill; it is a very beautiful hill. From a distance it looks like the hump of a bull. It has big trees growing on it, so people are afraid to cut them because they believe that the god "Ryngkew" is there, who takes care of and protects the country. This hill has two names, U Mawlong Siem and U Lyngkrem. U Mawlong Siem is the smaller (peak) on the southern side, and U Lyngkrem the taller one, in which there is a cave. The Mawsmai people sacrifice once or twice a year according to the god's demand. The Mawsmai people have, besides U Mawlong Siem, other village gods called "Ryngkew". The name of the one is "U Rangjalong," and the name of the other "U Rumsong." Sacrifices are offered to them two also. U Mawlong Siem is a very great and warm god. The other gods dare not engage in battle with him. He has a daughter called "Ka Khmat Khum" (i.e. the mouth of the abyss). The god of the Umwai people fell in love with this daughter, but he was unable to obtain her in marriage, as U Mawlong Siem did not know the exact reason why the name of U Mawlong Siem was given to him, but at any rate it appears that the name arose from the fact that in olden days before the death of a Siem there used to be heard as "Mawlong Siem" a great noise of beating of drums. The Mawsmai and the Mawmluh people used to hear it, and they attributed it to the god "Mawlong Siem," who beat the drum for his engagi on he chung. Um o lim ska i-synnad-shlain. Bun khynnih na ska jingngeh o long bun a synnai mani kyrteng. U don bi dong kiba shewa ki kyn jw don ha nid bun thuh bun duit nammar ha bi dawe ha o long U Ryngkew o kiei ska nammar ska da ia ka mutluh ka jaka. Ia ane o lim ki khot ar kyrteng, U Mawlong Siem bad U Lyngkrem, U Mawlong Siem o long ata ska khana lyngkoh shaphang shatti, bad U Lyngkrem o long ata ska jarong ah bad ska don ha kmie. Pahon bapoh. Ia ane U Mawlong Siem ki Mawsmai ki jw ri jingkiem da o khang shnain shi snem na shi ar snem katba o pan. Ki Mawmluh ruh ki lah kumjuh na la chung. Nalor ane U Mawlong Siem ki Mawsmai ki don shuh ki Ryngkew kajah shpang, ynai U Rangjalong bad ynai pat U Rumsong. Ia kine ki shia. Ane U Mawlong Siem o long o kiei ska khnaw shlain bad ska ah. Ki pass kiei kim ruid kan ia lah thymme ia ki. U don bawai ka shain baba kyrteng "Ka Khymmi Khmat," o kiei ki Umwai o shlia ia ka, kiawai ym lah pat nammar U Mawlong Siem ha ngawbha ia u. Bun shoi kyrteng Mawlong Siem ia u ym lah ban sip, kiawai ia kumne kumne i-mut ka kane ka kyrteng ka ia nih nammar ka synshyndai baba ya ka ing Siem ia jw ish ongew kangta ka U Mawlong Siem ka don ka jingmawa ban sang baba khnaw shlain. Ki Mawsmai bad ki Mawmluh ki jw ish ongew, bad ki jw thawai ka o kiei Mawlong Siem o ban kiing ban pyrshah shain. Lei ki baba ia-

1:Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 ART Khasi ART

552, 617 marry any one belonging to your own *kur*, or clan. Unlike the Khasis, however, a Lyngam can marry two sisters at a time.

575 The Lyngam marriages are arranged by *kniangs*, or go-betweens, much in the same way as Khasi marriages; but the ritual observed is less elaborate, and shows a mixture of Khasi and Garo customs (see Section III.). The Lyngams intermarry with the Garos. It appears that sometimes the parents of girls exact bride-money, and marriages by capture have been heard of. Both of these customs are more characteristic of the Bodo tribes of the plains than of the Khasis. There are no special birth customs, as with the Khasis, except that when the umbilical cord falls a fowl is sacrificed, and the child is brought outside the house. Children are named without any special ceremony.

764 The death customs of the Lyngams have been described in Section III. A peculiar characteristic is the keeping of the dead body in the house for days, sometimes even for several months, before it is buried. The putrefying corpse inside the house seems to cause these people no inconvenience, for whilst it remains there, they eat, carry on their ordinary occupations, and sleep there, regardless of what would be

778 considered by others an intolerable nuisance. The religion of these people consists of a mixture of ancestor-worship and the propitiation of the spirits of hill and hill, which are, most of them, believed to be of evil influence, as in the case with other savage races. As with the people of Nongstoin, the "primeval ancestress," *Ka Iew Iai*, is worshipped for the welfare of the clan, a sow being sacrificed to her, with a gourd of rice-beer, and leaves of the sak, or *diengpoong* tree. The leaves of the sak are afterwards hung up inside the house, together with the jaw-bone

[illegible] *jong* (a god who brings illness), by the roadside; also to *Ka Miang Rylli U Mujyaree*, the god of cultivation, at seed time, on the path to the forest clearing where the seed is sown. Models of paddy store-houses, baskets and agricultural implements are made, and being used to indicate the grain. These are placed by the roadside, the skulls of the sacrificial animals and the feathers of fowls being hung up on bamboos about the place where the sacrifice has been performed. There are no priests or

793, 796 *kyrpohs*, the fathers of the hamlet performing the various cere-

773 782 Several Khasis claim that the devil prescribed to their ancestors the method of sacrificing. On the other hand others maintain that in times past a man of rare size and strength came to their country. This man accomplished wonderful things, and commanded their ancestors to sacrifice and at the same time prescribed for them the method of sacrificing. Today the place [104] of his former dwelling on a mountain near Shillong is still pointed out. Since something divine was suspected in that man, he was called u 'lei shillong (the god Shillong).

• 774 The Khasi believe in a highest being, whom they call u blei nongthaw (1) (the creator god).

[104] 1. Pronounciation of Khasi (method of writing): ei is pronounced as two syllables, e - i, w is pronounced like u, aw is therefore like a - u, sh is pronounced like ach # phonetic š.

Just as the ideas about this person are very hazy, so are the concepts of eternity and the soul.

775 The Khasi are not in agreement among themselves about the conception of what happens to the soul after death. Several say that after death the soul goes up in the air and becomes air and therefore exists no longer. But most of them believe that the soul exists after death and [illegible] depend on personal guilt or sin but only on the conscientious completion of the burial ceremonies.

[61] 776 The country in which the Khasi live is divided into several districts, which were formerly ruled by several kings before the English came. [105] According to the Khasi each district

778 has its own tutelary god on whom they confer the name of the district.

Villages have their own tutelary gods, families have their tutelary gods, even individual people ha.. their guardian gods, to whom they occasionally bring a sacrifice.

The Khasi and Synteng also honor gods who are not thought of as tutelary gods but as dispensers of purely material favors, as, for example, u 'lei longspah (god of wealth) and u'lei umtong (the god of water which is used for cooking and drinking). (2)

2. Cf. (below, p. 430) the summarized table of some of the good and evil gods who are honored by the Khasi and the Synteng.

But in general the Khasi believe that the gods or spirits are evil spirits, whom they then designate with the name kould (devil).

782 They believe that their country is full of such kould. The chief task of the Khasi is to pacify them. They try by all means to put them in a good mood, and to appease them by sacrifice. It is fear which incites them to their religious activities, not respect or actual reverence. For the Khasi are convinced that it was formerly better. They relate that in the beginning heaven and earth were near together, that people could converse directly with u blei nongthaw the creator god, and that there was still no sin at that time. Now, however, man is sinful and no one offering a sacrifice forgets to pronounce the formulas: nga briu nga la pap (I, man, have sinned). Thus the concept sin is one of the bases of the Khasi religion. The other basis is sacrifice. There is no doubt that sin and sacrifice make up the basic thoughts of the religious views

of the Khasi.

Just as the Khasi are unable to explain how man fell into sin, so they also cannot explain why the rooster appears as mediator between god and man. The Khasi tradition relates of the rooster: u khun ka blei uba kit ryndang ba shah ryndang na ka byrta jong nga u briu, i.e. he who, as son of the goddess, gives his life for man, thus expiating sin through sacrifice and reconciling god.

The Khasi believe in another world and their attention is directed towards the comfort of the spirits of the dead. One of the main tasks is to give them nourishment (ai ban), which must be done, since the welfare of the living depends on the welfare of the dead. For example, if one can no longer get the corpse of the deceased because it is in a foreign country or has been consumed by wild animals, one takes his clothes at the very least and carries out the burial ceremonies with these. For only such spirits, whose burial ceremonies were performed according to usage and custom, can participate in chewing betel nuts in the garden (in the house) of god, whereas the others must wander around on earth or must continue living in insects, birds, and other animals. They do not believe in hell (in the Christian sense). The greatest felicity for a Khasi is "to chew betel nuts perpetually." Therefore they conceive of heaven as the dwelling (garden or house) of god, in which only betel nuts are chewed: uba ban kwai ha iing u blei (he who chews betel nuts in the house of god).

This cult of spirits, which relates to deceased relatives, is mixed with the ancestor cult. Thus the first great-grandmother of each sib (jaid) becomes a goddess (ka Jaobei) and the first great-grandfather of the sib a god (u Thealang).

776 Finally other earthly things are deified,
778 and the cult of spirits increases in objects.
782 If there is an unusually formed mountain anywhere, sacrifices are brought to it, since a kwaid lives there. And the spirit who inhabits the mountain is soon combined with the mountain itself, and then the mountain is worshipped and sacrifices are brought to it. The same thing happens with rivers. How easily a river god can be insulted and made angry by fishing or by crossing over to the other bank! Therefore the first thing to do is to bring the river god a sacrifice. The Khasi never make a picture, neither of stone nor of wood, which is supposed to represent their gods, but nevertheless they revere many powers of nature and phenomena of nature, and it is difficult to differentiate the extent to which the mountain or river is worshipped and the extent to which sacrifice is made to the spirit of the mountain or the river.

In everything that one calls bad luck or misfortune the Khasi see the work of evil spirits: in the bad harvest, in flood, in sickness. The spirits live in the primeval forest, in the steep inaccessible cliffs, in the rushing river, in the green tree. They come through the air in all weather. They give the tiger strength, the snake poison, the thicket fever, and they lurk in cholera for their victim.

782 These are the reasons for the many sacrifices and sacrificial customs of the Khasi all of which are only to bring about the reconciliation of the angered spirits. Prayers also occur during individual sacrificial scenes which one can conceive of as prayers of thanks or of praise, but these are exceptions.

The sacrifices are performed either by sacrificial priests (lyngdoh) or by old men who have experience. First one seeks out the spirit who

782 must be appeased by throwing eggs. If the desired
[781] effect does not occur after the sacrifice has been offered, further information is sought by observing intestines (sacrifice of rooster), and the sacrifice is offered again. At least that is what is done for sickness. The other sacrifices will be described in more detail later.

771 The religion of the Khasi is one that arises
774 from fear of misfortune and harm, and is active in the worship of (evil) spirits through sacrifice. This definition of mine corresponds essentially with the definitions of Bivar, (3) who

[113] 3. Bivar, Administration Report on the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District of 1876.

says: "The Khasi religion may be briefly defined as a form to cure illnesses and to ward off misfortune, by finding out [110] the name of the devil who is the original cause of the evil and to appease him by sacrifices which are necessary," and Gurdon (4) "calls the Khasi religion a cult

[113] 4. Gurdon, The Khasi (London, 1907) p. 105.

of spirits, i.e., actually rather a reconciliation of spirits, good as well as bad, by sacrifices, which are offered occasionally, especially in times of distress."

Table of Summary

• 776 of several gods (good and evil) who are revered by the Khasi and the Synteng.

1. Good Gods:

a blei nongthaw, the creator god,
a 'lei longspah, the (good) god of wealth,

776 u 'lei umtong, the god of water that is used for cooking and drinking,
u 'lei shillong, the god who commanded sacrifice,
u sim shillong ramjah, the highest god of the Synteng,
ka maidolong, the highest goddess of the Synteng,
u sim synriang, the son of the above who was born in a wonderful, supernatural way,
ka ram-ew, the goddess of earth,
ka puron, one of the first feminine deities of the Khasi, who is supposed to represent the first maternal ancestor,
u phan suid iap, one of the ancestor spirits who is invoked for blessing of the living and the dead,
u phan long siem, the household god of a king,
ka longkha, the goddess of marriage,
ka 'leikhuri, the household goddess of a certain sib of the Khasi,
u 'suid nia, the spirit of the first maternal great-uncle of a sib,
ka blei long-s'iem, the goddess who makes kings kings,
ka s'iem-synshar, the goddess who rules the world,
u biskurom, the god who teaches the playing of flutes and of other musical instruments,
ka blei-jew-lei-hat, the goddess of the market places,
u 'lei pyrthat, the god of thunder,
ka 'lei aitem, the goddess of the river,
ka 'lei iing, the household goddess,
ka ksaw ka jirngam, the goddess who brings luck, especially in the hunt,
u rynkew shnong, the tutelary god of a village,
u basa shnong, the tutelary god of a village,
u phan u kyrpad, the tutelary god of a village,
ka longkur, the tutelary goddess of a sib,

776 ka 'lei-sad 'lei-sunom, the tutelary goddess of a royal family,
ka 'leikhyrdop 'leikharai, the goddess who guards the entrance to the village in time of war,
ka 'lei-muluk, the goddess who guards the state or village,
ka sad, the goddess who guards the royal families,
ka ram-khandi, the goddess who inspires the people in time of war.

[411] 2. Evil Gods

u siem khylliew, the god of smallpox,
ka duba, the fever demoness in and around Thriagat,
ka rih, the demoness of malaria fever,
ka khlam, the demoness of cholera,
ka tyrut, the demoness who causes violent death,
u mahet, a devil to whom one offers sacrifices only inside a house,
ka byrdam, the demoness who causes attacks of cramps,
u kyrter, the devil who causes blindness,
u lasamkhh, the devil who causes swelling of the joints and hoarseness,
u jingbih-u lasam, the devil who causes sickness of the mouth and of the teeth,
ka tihar, the demoness who causes severe colic,
ka shwar, the demoness who causes convulsive cramps,
ka shuar, the demoness of wealth,
u thymrai, the devil who always makes illnesses worse,
ka shur, the demoness of wealth (only among the Khasi),
ka taro, the demoness of wealth (only among the Synteng),
u 'suid-um, the devil of water who attacks the women and causes sterility and miscarriage,

776 u tynjang, the lame devil who lives in the thicket and tickles people to death,
ka ron, the worst of all the demonesses (only among the Synteng),
u 'suid-lam-iap, the executor of the commands of god, who has to fetch the souls into the other world,
u thlen, the devil of wealth and comfort who can only be worshipped by human sacrifice,
ka smer, a demoness who brings violent death,
ka syrti, the demoness who scratches and cuts, saws, and files (by pain in the intestines),
ka jumai, the demoness of earthquakes,
ka niangriang, the demoness who causes children's illnesses (especially in the navel),
u 'suid briew or u 'suid ngon, the devil who attacks people in the early morning and causes stitches in the side or hoarseness,
u 'suid-kynta-maram, the devil who makes headaches,
u synkai bamon, an evil spirit,
ka ramshandi, a demoness.

3. Revered Powers of Nature:

778 The Punatit River, to whom the kings of Mongstoin, Dangrin, and Nobosohpoh offer sacrifices.
the Khai-mara River among the War,
the Kopili River among the Synteng,
the Myntang River among the Synteng,
the Shillong Peak (mountain near Shillong),
the Wahlang Mountain near Shillong, [412]
the Kyllong Cliffs,
the Symper Mountain,
the mountain Pyddieng blei lyngdoh near Shangpung (Jaintia).

779 754 2. Methods of Warding Off Evil Spirits

The Khasi do not practise magic in the

strictest sense of the word. It is rather an instinctive activity, which is influenced by superstition to which they have succumbed. In their opinion all misfortune and bad luck are caused by evil spirits. The chief purpose of their sacrifices is to propitiate them (khein ban khai). But they well know that it is possible to cause others harm with the help of the ksuid. Their magic consists of this and in warding off harm. The magic is not accomplished by special magicians who make a profession of it; but whoever believes he is able to harm others with the help of the devil tries it. In the same way, those who have to ward off harm of any kind hope to be able to accomplish this with the help of the devil.

If anyone has a throat ailment, whether it is a tumor or only hoarseness, they believe that it occurs through the influence of the devil u lasamdoh. Therefore a rooster or a pig is sacrificed in the courtyard of the person concerned. The blood of the sacrificed animal is given to the sick person to drink so that he may recover.

They do similar things when a person has a toothache or is sick with some kind of mouth ailment. This sickness is ascribed to the devil u jingbih.

If a child is born blind they believe that adultery on the part of the father is the cause. This adultery is punished in the child by the devil u kyrdap.

The demoness ka byrdaw causes attacks of cramps, and convulsive cramps are the work of the feared demoness ka shwar.

Existent ailments are made definitely worse by the devil u thyrnrei.

Whoever goes into the forest and hears the call: kăw-hoit, kăw-hoit, should hurry away because the devil u 'suid-tynjang lives there and

● 776 [753] is calling. He is, however, lame; but whoever answers the call or screams is lost, since he will be seized by the 'suid tynjang and tickled to death.

[763] If one wishes to protect oneself from a violent death, one must propitiate the demoness ka tyrut by sacrifice, because she is the original cause of this method of dying. The Khasi have a great respect for violent death as it increases the difficulties of the prescribed ceremonies of burial, even making them impossible, which would in turn deny the spirit of the departed one peace in eternity.

[775] They also live in fear of the devil u 'suid-lam-iap (the messenger of god, i.e., the executor of his commands). He leads the souls of people away into another kingdom. He is supposed to be horrible; of gigantic size, he walks around with long trailing hair seeking his victim. His teeth are as large as a ka wait (a hatchet or an axe).

[842] [413] The women are especially afraid of a devil whom they call u 'suid-um (the water devil). He has the power of attacking women and causing sterility in them, and if they are pregnant causing a miscarriage.

776 783 The demoness ka khlam brings cholera and the demoness ka tihar brings severe colic.

They believe that they get malaria through the influence of the demoness ka rih, while in the region of Theriaghat the fever is ascribed to the demoness ka duba.

Smallpox, which is otherwise feared everywhere, is considered by the Khasi to be evidence of the favor of the god u siem niang thylliew. If there is someone in one of the huts sick with smallpox, the sick person is not only not avoided, but even healthy children are brought there, so that they may receive the "kiss of the god," i.e., that they may also get smallpox.

that they may also get smallpox.

776 Every Khasi is desirous of wealth. Therefore they sacrifice to the demoness of wealth, ka shur, whom they fear just as much as the Synteng fear the demoness ka taro, who likewise only allows the desired wealth to come to those who revere her.

776 But all evil taken together can be caused by the demoness ka ron. She is the worst of all devils in the opinion of the Synteng. The Khasi sacrifice only to her and the devil u mahet inside the hut, and not as is otherwise customary out of doors (in the courtyard of the hut).

But the Khasi have the greatest fear of the [925] devil u thlen. He can be kept in the house by people in the form of a snake. Since he is only propitiated by human blood, it is necessary to find human sacrifices (ka 'langthoklieh). One cuts off the toenails and fingernails of the victims and these are brought with the blood of the murdered one during the night in a closed house as a sacrifice to the devil with prayers and exhortations. To get these human sacrifices, the thlen possessor must look for them with cunning or violence. Usually hired murderers are sent out, to whom one previously hands a quite special liquor 'iad-tang-snem (literally: lasts for a year). The Khasi believe that anyone who drinks this liquor is so influenced (enchanted) that he will really carry out the planned murder. When these murderers (nong-shoh-noh) are on their way or waiting in ambush to catch their victim for the thlen, they may not use any iron, because the thlen near the cave of Pomdalai near Cherrapunji was killed by a brave man named u suidnoh, when the thlen appeared there in the form of an enormous snake in order to swallow up people and animals. The victim is struck down with a stick which usually has a silver knob.

776 782 Then the wings of his nose are cut with a shear, or pincer of silver and the blood is drained off. In the same way the nails on the hands and feet are cut off with silver shears. Finally the dead body is thrown into an abyss. (5)

[113] 5. For further details about "Human Sacrifice Among the Khasi", see Dr. P. C. Becker, Salvatorianische Mitteilungen [Salvatorian Communications], 1909, No. 5, pp. 75 ff.

754 782 [114] Since on the one hand many Khasi are busy trying to kill others with the help of the devil or to make them sick (ai-ksuid), and on the other hand the evil spirits also harm men without being called upon, an enormous fear is thus the fruit of this superstition. From this fear comes the desire to make oneself free from the influence of evil spirits (lait-ksud) or to modify this influence by sacrifices khad) or at least to propitiate the devil compeletely (khein-ban khai).

796 [782] Therefore the Synteng annually hold a large feast for driving awaycholera (ka behdiengkhlam). The offered sacrificeshave the purpose or propitiating the feared demoness ka khlam but at the same time they also have the purpose of making the participants in the sacrifice safe against cholera (to enhant them). Gurdon (6)

6. Gurdon, The Khasis.

describes this feast as follows: "In the month of June when the river is full of water, on a certain day the men go in the morning in front of the huts and strike the roofs of the huts with sticks. At the same time they call on the demoness ka khlam continuously and challenge her to leave

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782 Yn sa ioh ka khiah ka nang, ieng rangbah u bynriew joit suk me u blei lyngngai weng ka thoah ka tar ka kjab ka star.

Ong ym pat shong ka dur da kumta khadei dang kumwei du, kiew da ka thoh da ka tar da ka brain da ka briah da ka kjab da ka star, katta mo blei tray kynrad, kuri-ei nga pyneum nga pynsleh nga pyntang nga pynpung ha ka umthwei umlyngiam, ban kiew ka syrti ka jumai ban um ka syndang ha khmat ka duwan ka dupat ban nang ka korbar ka sorbar mo?

We receive the sublime and the possible. Quickly rise up, mani Well satisfied be thou, o god! Take away the faults, the stains, the band and the sling.

Say: the picture does not yet appear thus, rather different, is it not so! Raise thyself from the great stains and from the great faults and from all the little stains and spots, from sling and band and then, is it not so, o god and master, it is in vain! I wash and bathe and make pipes of water and scooped-out wells in the eddy and in the depths, so that ka syrtieh (19)

[17%] 19. Ka syrtieh is a demoness, who cuts and scratches and files and saws, i.e., through inner pains.

and ka Jumai (20) may

[17%] 20. Ka jumai is the demoness of earthquakes.

arise, so that the throat may dissolve (bleed to death) before the visage of the

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Shan syiar, hei nga dkhat sohpet shynnai ban na.g ka korbar ka sorbar, kane de ka deng de ka kup ka ryndia ka muka ka iarong ka muna ho, jei dong tam dong lait ban lait ka jot ka rem no?

alter, so that the counsel be good, is it not so?

Thou blood of the rooster, hurrah! Look, I tear out its navel, the intestines, so that the counsel be good. This here is the jewelry, this the garment, this the silk, this the purse and the net, is it not so? Look, here is the tube for gathering, here the tube for escaping from destruction and guilt is it not so?

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6. Discovering the Spirits that Need Appeasing (khein kwuid).

Khein kwuid means the seeking for or the discovering of the insult to the goddess which sells (die) man through suffering to the pain-causer (kwuid). The demon cannot harm man if the goddess does not stand for it and allow it. The guilt of man plays no part in this (in and of itself). The Khasi say that in their religion there is only one goddess, the "Giver of Orders" (ka nongkhukum). She commands that a phan o ayryad [321] should be, that a suid-nia of Jaubei [illegible] maternal uncle of the sib, in this case he is supposed to be the "intercessor" with the Jaubei). Or she herself chooses a means, that is supposed to be "god." for example, as she herself becomes the goddess of wealth or the goddess of the curse. This goddess gives the command for the sacrifices: That the piece (u dykhot) and the

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sour thing (a lamjew) be sacrificed! If this goddess is insulted by any kind of error, then she must be propitiated again, and this is done by the sacrifice of a goat, of a pig, or through the sacrifice of the gourd and the gourd bottle, or (for the very poor) through the sacrifice of water which one shakes out on a brass plate (ka pliang) or on a woven plate (ka phung). It is she also who commands that one drive away the demon or the demoness, especially the demon who helps day and night (uba rap synnia rap angi), by a sacrifice of money, a hundred or a ten, which must be brought to him.

Everything is at her command: thus the sacrifice of food which is brought the spirits (ai bam ia ki suidiap), the sacrifice of thanks which is brought the Thaulang (kaba ngah thaulang), the auguries (kaba tap synglew tap synlang) or the naming of children (tap lubri tap hyrlang). For example, if a mountain devil or a river devil is supposed to be driven away, she gives the command to ask the oracle of the house first and not to make a noise. Then, however, one should take a freely chosen sacrifice, such as doves, chickens, pigs, or goats and strew them with rice and then let them run off free. Anyone who catches them may keep them.

[706] In this religion there is also something very painful and extremely difficult, namely finding out the guilt of one long since dead in order to atone for it again through sacrifice. For sometimes nothing can be found that is the reason or cause of sickness or trouble and therefore it must be the error of an ancestor that is not yet expiated. But this kind of investigation of devils is very difficult, since one cannot easily discover the connection. An experienced and worthy sacrifice who

understands how to interpret the signs of the goddess must take this case in hand.

If the goddess Jaubei was insulted by an offense, a goat must be sacrificed to her. This goat must be beautiful, it must be white, it must be full-grown, but still virginal. The sacrifice is brought into the front courtyard. On the altar, which is usually prepared of loam or earth, (21) the sacrificial gifts are

21. By "altar" (ka dawan) the Khasi means everything on which he offers his sacrifices, whether it be a stone, or a banana leaf, a heap of loam, or an altar made of earth.

now spread out: bread(kpu), cake (rymai), gourds (u klong), young oak shoots (u sning ka laliar), uncooked rice (u khaw) and fermented rice water (ka sapoh). Now the goat's head is cut off with one blow. The dead animal is cut up and the separate pieces needed for the sacrifice are placed in readiness. There are various ways of sacrificing. Some take five such pieces, others seven, and again others take nine pieces. But what is taken for the sacrifice, must [424] come from the inside of the animal (napoh krem ka kypoh, i.e., from the stomach cavity). Those who use five pieces take something from the liver, something from the heart, something from the lung, something from the kidneys, and something from the loin (of meat, the part that runs along the spinal marrow).

Those who use seven parts for the sacrifice take the above mentioned parts and in addition some of the spleen and some of the small intestine.

161 Stromtal des Brahmaputra [In the Valley of the Brahmaputra], (Aachen: Xaverius Publishing House, 1923) p. 293.

784 are divided into 10 kingdoms and 15 small states
621 (communities). In each of these kingdoms and communities an official state sacrifice is of-
783 fered each year. The smaller state units offer
776 it to the u bass shnong or to the u phan u
794 kyrpad (the tutelary god of a village), the larger one to the u 'lei Shillong (the god who has commanded the sacrifice) [218]. The purpose of this large sacrifice is to thank the revered god for the country (kingdom or community) and to beg him to make its inhabitants
782 healthy and happy. This is shown by the prayers
796 spoken at these sacrifices, namely: "O god Shillong! for thee is this prayer, this sacrifice of goat, of hen, of kpu and rynsi (a kind of bread of rice meal or cornmeal with pounded sugar), of utensils of preparation, as thou hast given them to the royal lineage, so that once in every year Puja is celebrated in thy name, so that we may live happily, be healthy and increase so that kings will arise, so that their honor and that of the kingdom will grow and increase and the children of the kingdom will spread out to increase thy name and thy honor." (10)

10. P. Dr. C. Becker, S.D.S., "Die Mongkrempuja in den Khasibergen" [The Mongkrem Puja in the Khasi Mountains], Anthropos Vol. 4, 1909, p. 901.

In another prayer they say: "O lord, thou who hast created heaven and earth, thou hast placed a king that we may be children of his

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sacrifice — that is the murder itself.

3. to describe the offering of the sacrifice.

Following from this, several questions arise of their own accord, namely:

1. How do the people accept these facts?
   a) the fear among the people,
   b) the liberation from thlen,
   c) story of former thlen possessors.

2. The position of the English-Indian government to these human sacrifices?

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1. The Thlen Legend

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About five miles west of Cher[illegible]punji, (15)

15. The following accounts are taken from the article "[illegible]menschenopfer unter den Khasi" [Human Sacrifice Among the Khasi] by Dr. C. Becker, S.D.S., Salvatorianische Mitteilungen [Salvatorian Communications] 1909, No. 5, pp. 75 ff.

near the great waterfall Noh ka Likai, there is the cave Pomdalai, about which an old Khasi legend is concerned. The dwelling place of an enormous snake —called u thlen — which caused great destruction among men and animals was once here. People had to pass here to go to market; half of them were regularly swallowed by the thlen, the others could continue their way peacefully. It was a rule for the thlen, only to consume half the number of people or animals that came by. After many people had lost their lives in this fashion, the Khasi one day held a large meeting, a darbar, with the inhabitants of the valleys, to consider how they could

773 remedy this great misfortune. A brave man named
776 Suidnoh volunteered to cause a change. He be-
782 gan to drive goats, pigs, and cattle to the thlen to give them to the snake to eat. After he had done this for quite some time, the thlen became quite tame and trusting. One day Suidnoh brought along a piece of glowing hot iron which he held with a tongs. He ordered the snake to open its mouth so that he could give it a piece of meat. The snake believed him, opened its mouth and Suidnoh quickly thrust the glowing hot iron in its throat so that the snake burst with horrible writhings. In another gathering it was decided to cut the snake into two pieces: the inhabitants of the valley were supposed to eat one half, the Khasi the other half. Since the former are very numerous, it was easy for them to manage their portion; but the Khasi could not quite master their share and left some of it. Others say that in the village Mawphu, west of Cherrapoonji, an old woman forgot to eat up her share. In short the Khasi did not quite get rid of their share and so it came about that the snake could grow again and he still lives among them up to the present day.

2. The Preparations for the Sacrifice

However the thlen is no longer the public waylayer of previous times. He has withdrawn into the interior of the houses; also he no longer is in just one place, but may be found in several. There are certain families that are considered possessors of such a devil snake and are known as such among the people. They are simply called the Dongri thlen, owners of a thlen. The thlen is cared for and secretly kept by the owner very carefully in a safe place. It is only supposed to be seen by members of the household

774 of the thlen owner. It is also said of the thlen
775 that it can reduce itself to the size of a thin
784 thread and therefore can easily find a place in a basket or earthen jar. Others even say that it has the power to change itself into a cat or a rooster or a stone and to stay with the owner in this form.

774 The possession of the thlen is a valuable
782 thing for the owner; for where the thlen makes
682 his home, it brings good fortune and wealth to the family. However, the snake only does this on the condition that it is provided with human blood. If it does not receive this, it announces itself from time to time in the family concerned during the night in a dream. If its desires are still not fulfilled, it then comes bringing sickness, misfortune, impoverishment, and the like. There is nothing that the owner can do other than satisfy or propitiate the thlen by human murder. In the night he waits for his victim alone or with another whom he has hired for this purpose. Often the thlen worshippers have a so-called nonghylle, i.e., a wage earner who shares the wealth of his master for his efforts without having to bother with other work. He goes out in ambush with his master and watches hidden from the heights of a mountain, or along the road, or at the edge of the forest to see whether anyone is coming along the way. By signs or shouts he warns his master who is waiting some distance away, and then they commit the murder together. Both are usually disguised and armed with a wooden club for killing their victim. The ordinary people call these murderers in the service of the thlen as well as the thlen worshippers in general only nongnoh mih, literally, killers. They may not use iron weapons for committing their dark deeds, as iron proved to be fatal for the thlen tribal father, as was told

[illegible]

776 above. The tips of the hair and the finger-
682 nails of the slain person are cut off with
772 silver shears; then the murderer pricks the wings of the nose with a silver lancet and catches the blood that flows out in a bamboo tube. This is called ajar enan. Again no dish or iron or metal may be used for catching the blood.

}. The Offering of the Sacrifice.

772 The taken owner now asks the oracle about
776 the actual time when he should sacrifice the blood to the taken. When this is revealed, the whole family gathers together in the hut of the taken owner (male or female) in the dark night-time. The doors are opened and costly clothe are spread out on the floor. The blood of the slain person is poured into a brass dish or a plate (sa pilang); the hair and fingernails are placed there. One member of the family begins to strike a small drum and cries while doing it: "O uncle, o father, come forth, we have done everything to make thee satisfied, and now we have succeeded. (776) Give us thy blessing, so that we may receive health and wealth!" They say that the taken is only seen by the members of the household of the owner. No matter what form it otherwise has while staying in the house, at the sacrifice of human blood it appears in its true form as a snake. It is supposed to crawl out of its hiding place when called upon, then stretch itself out until it has attained its full size. It approaches the platter and waits a while in front of it until the spirit of the slain person appears standing on the platter. The spirit is supposed to laugh. The snake now begins to swallow the entire form, beginning with the feet; the victim is supposed to laugh continuously. Obviously it is difficult to find out

anything more certain and exact about activities
that are carried on in complete seclusion. The
devil snake is satisfied again after receiving
the sacrifice, and now pours forth a plenitude
of good luck and wealth over the house.

Substitute sacrifice: Naturally it is not always easy to find a human sacrifice. In this case the thlen owner tries to help himself in another way. He sets out to catch at least some of the hair or the clothing of somebody or other and to sacrifice this to the devil snake. This means an evil fate for those, to whom the hair or the bit of cloth belongs, for the belief exists among the Khasi that the person concerned will become sick soon thereafter, will languish and die or at the very least misfortune and poverty will come to him. They are therefore very much on their guard that nothing of that sort will come into the hands of a thlen adherent. For example, if someone loses a hair, he is extremely careful to throw it into the fire at once and thus destroy it before a thlen owner can appropriate it. If the thlen owner cannot get hold of anything at all, he at least satisfies himself by throwing stones at a victim or knocking on strange doors during the night. He then calls upon the thlen to tell him that he has done his best to get booty for him but that unfortunately he was unsuccessful. The devil snake is supposed to be satisfied with this for a time until he again makes his desire for human blood known. Many heathen, on the other hand, try to get well when they are sick by putting themselves under the protection of the thlen. They give the thlen owner some of their hair, pieces of clothing, and a corresponding gift of money or food as a sacrifice for the thlen--ai thlen--in order to acquire their health again.

How Do the People Accept These Facts?

a) The Fear among the People

A great fear of these murderers who are in the service of the Ulen permeates the whole life of the Ehasi; this feeling is still especially strong in the kingdoms of Sherre, Wjilen, and Bongbren. Naturally they guard themselves well from people who are supposed to be in possession of a devil snake and they often do not even dare to speak their names out loud for fear that misfortune could befall them. Many of them are certainly known by the people; others are just guessed at. We tried very hard to get a photograph of such people who are considered to be Ulen owners; but we met only with complete refusal from them. Their bad conscience probably made them fearful. I was able to photograph the house of a woman Ulen worshipper in Bwarel, several [illegible] miles away from Sherre. In contrast to most of the Ehasi huts, indications of wealth were evident on the outside, since the hut was covered with tin. In spite of all my pleas the woman could not be prevailed upon to have herself photographed. Such an idea frightened her so that she cried out loud: "O, we are investigated so much!"

At night a Ehasi does not really trust himself alone outside of his hut. If he is overtaken by darkness on the way home, he may be seen hurrying towards his home, singing or calling in a loud voice from time to time to give himself courage. A single man, even if he does not have to go far from his hut to work is not likely to go without his big knife — he will — under his arm to protect himself against all possible attacks. The people usually go together (in groups)

on the way to or from more distant markets.
When they go to the even bigger markets which are
several days' journey away, they only go to the
markets where they have good friends along the
way, where they can spend the night. Even the
missionary has to endure this general feeling of
fear. For example, if he has to send something
from one place to another which one man could
easily carry; or if he is on a journey when he
might like to send on his small amount of luggage,
his laundry, and food. Even if the place is only
a day distant, it is not possible for him to hire
one man for such an errand. There is nothing for
him to do other than to hire two porters and
naturally also to pay them, or to wait until a
group of market people are going along the same
way, to whom a single man can attach himself. If
you criticize the people for the foolishness of
their behavior or the inconvenience it causes,
their simple answer is: "I am afraid of the
nongohom nuh" (killers).

In the other hand the people defend themselves
against such criminals. According to ancient
Khasi justice, the killing of such a nongohom
nuh is not considered murder and is not punished
by death. Whoever has killed a nongohom nuh does
not need to do more than he who kills a rubber,
namely to give 5 rupees (7 gold marks) and a pig
to the U'lien (king). In the kingdom of Nongkrem
the official lyngdoh has the right to confiscate
all the property of those persons who are con-
victed for harboring an evil spirit -- jingkhi --
in their house. The lyngdoh can keep the objects
of value for themselves, while the house, includ-
ing contents, is burned down. At the same time
the people take justice into their own hands. In
the year 1903 one of these murderers in the
service of the devil snake was caught in the act
in Nongkrem. Without more ado his nose was cut
off and he was left to go with the mark of Cain.

776 off and he was let go with the mark of Cain.

b) Liberation from the Thlen.

776 It also happens that people who revered a
772 thlen and sacrificed to it wish to free themselves
773 from its power and sever all connections with it. This is called pynsud noh ia u thlen, which means throwing away, exposing the thlen. However this is connected with a great sacrifice for the family concerned. 777 To get free of the thlen, there is no other way than to give up all their possessions. House and contents must be burned down; money and objects of value of all kinds thrown away and even the household animals must be given up. This takes place with the observance of a certain ceremony which is performed by the lyngdoh of a village with the participation of men designated by the S'iem (Khasi king). The sacrificer (lyngdoh) first asks the oracle about the place, mountains, etc., where the thlen goods should be taken. When that is found out, the ones who were the thlen owners go with the lyngdoh and the men named, as well as with a crowd of spectators to the place that has been determined upon. All the movable goods, including clothes, that belong to the ones who wish to be free, are brought here. The lyngdoh speaks an oath and then commands the thlen owners, who have been deprived of all their property down to their naked skins, to return to the village directly without looking around. Then the rest of the spectators leave. This occurs during the night. It is the superstition of the people that the devil snake is inwardly joined with property and follows it. Whoever should appropriate it therefore would also be in the power of the devil snake. The snake would climb on him as the expression says (kin u thlen ha ki).

• 77% 774 773 Therefore nobody dares to appropriate the objects that have been thrown away or even to touch these. Only into the house of the S'iem and into the whole royal family can no entrance be found by the thlen, and therefore some valuable things may be given to the Khasi king. -his may be connected with the fact that usually on the next morning after the above ceremony nothing more is to be found of the objects that were given away. Therefore it rarely happened in former times that anyone kept a found object from fear that it might be thlen property and he might bring the thlen devil into his house with it. But if they did take an object they found, a piece of money or such, home with them, the oracle was first asked by egg throwing whether it contained any evil, and only when this was denied and the real owner could not be found did they keep a part of it; the rest had to be used for sacrificial purposes.

The immovable property is treated the same way as the movable property. Fields which the family formerly possessed lie fallow; nobody dares to take them over or to plant anything on them. [774] But the whole village hastens to help the former thlen owners who have lost all their property. They are given clothes and rice and helped in building a hut so that they can begin an honest life again.

c) Story of a Former Thlen Worshipper.

776 773 How is all this known about the thlen, many ask, if the owners try to hide their secret? An indirect answer is already given by the whole previous presentation. Then it also happens, for example, that one marry into the house of a woman who is a thlen owner. Certainly this is not always known beforehand, although real thlen [(Local name; see ref no. pp 2855 --Ed.-in-C.]

776 owners can only conceal this for any length of
573 time with difficulty. Now when the woman gathers the members of her household and the unsuspecting man together for the Uhlen sacrifice, this man dashes out from fright and tells the horrible things that he has seen. He never returns to his wife by whom he was deceived by the concealment of such an important condition and he seeks another wife.

776 /777 The accounts of previous Uhlen owners
672 finally give further information. I will only
773 introduce one case as it was told by one of these. I am indebted for this to the kindness of the missionary in Cherrapunji, P. Corbinian Boshein S.V.D. who has been there many years and to whom a former Uhlen owner related his experiences. This he translated into our language as follows:

"Formerly we were very poor people. Then one day we found a wunderfully beautiful smooth stone on the mountain when we were chopping wood, and we brought it home and preserved it. From this time on we had good luck everywhere; every undertaking succeeded, we never had losses and our fortune increased from day to day and even at gambling we never lost. Gradually we became rich people. That matters continued for four or five years. Then I had a strange dream. A woman appeared to me who said to me: "Look, I have given you such great wealth, now I also demand a sacrifice of you. You should sacrifice a long thoh khlih to me, i.e., a goat with a spotted head." The next morning I told my dream to the members of the household, and they thought that she was the goddess who was demanding the sacrifice owing to her. So we sacrificed a goat. But soon after I had a dream again and the same voice as before spoke to me again: "I have demanded a long thoh khlih of you and you only gave me a goat. The goat, however, that I demand,

• 776 is human blood ka enan bris!" The next morning
682 I told my dream again and all my relatives were
783 frightened, for they knew now that it was the thlen devil and not the goddess who made them rich. But now we had to decide what we would do: give up all our wealth and possession or fulfill the will of the thlen. We decided to do the latter. But we let week after week go by until the thlen began to threaten that he would consume our whole house. Now we went, my brother and I out stalking to see if we could murder someone. We saw a woman from our village go alone to the forest to gather wood. We crept after her and when we thought the moment was right we fell upon her with blows and beat her till she was dead. Immediately thereafter, however, we fled deeper into the forest with the intention of taking the blood from the slain woman somewhat later when we could do it undisturbed. But after a while the woman came to her senses and luckily escaped back to the village by a different way. When she arrived home she told what had happened and named the two of us brothers as her murderers. Her relatives went at once to the chief and accused us. When we now came out of our hiding place to get the blood from the woman who we supposed was dead, we found to our astonishment that she had disappeared. We hurried along the road to pursue her but we could not find her anywhere. When we came home we were told at once that a woman had luckily escaped from murderers, but that it was still questionable whether she would live. We, however, wished secretly that she would die. But the chieftain had commanded that the woman be cared for carefully. When she had so far recovered that she could come to a judicial meeting, the chieftain ordered all the inhabitants of the village to the gathering. Our hands and feet trembled, and stuttering we confessed our

• 776 guilt. The chieftain then said to us: "You
684 will pay the woman the entire cost of her care
783 and agree that I have your thlen driven out and that you give up your property; if you will do that, nothing more will be done to you. A hut where you can live temporarily, a cloth (230) so that you can at least cover your honor, and rice which you need will be given you by the village until you can again save something. But if you do not wish to do that then a severe punishment will be meted out to you without mercy or pity." We submitted to the judgment of the chieftain. We then had all our possessions carried away and our house burned down to the ground. And when we had moved into the hut which was built for us by the inhabitants of the village at the command of the chieftain, lo, this wonderful stone was there. We reported this to the chieftain and he took counsel with his elders as to what should now be done. They came to the conclusion that at the time of the first exorcism the Lyngdoh had not given us the command to go home directly without looking around. We had looked around and therefore the thlen had come to us again. Therefore the chieftain now commanded that the expulsion and exorcism and destruction should be undertaken again. This time we went straight home without looking around and so we were then free of the thlen. We have never seen the thlen itself." This much the report of the thlen worshipper.

The Position of the English-Indian Government in Respect to these Human Sacrifices.

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783

But is it possible, many will ask, that such crimes can occur in a British province of the Indian Empire? Why are such things not called to the attention of the English government and why

One month before the celebration rice liquor is poured into a hollowed out gourd bottle in the house of the S'iem shŭl and offered before the rishot Blei as a 'mait' (sacrifice of drink). This is done in order to inform the u Suidnia long S'iem (the spirit of the first great-uncle on the maternal side who was the first king), the ka Blei long S'iem (the divinity who makes kings kings) and the u Blei Shillong (the god Shillong), that preparations are now being made for the Puja and that they might help with them.

The u Blei Shillong plays the chief part in the whole ceremony. He enjoys great reverence among the Khasi, especially in the kingdoms Nongkrem and Nylliem. Not far from Nongkrem a mountain peak rises 6,450 feet above the sea. It is the highest peak in the Khasi Mountains. Its name is "Shillong Peak." Here is the seat of the god Shillong. The story goes that a man appeared here once, who said he /was/ had not been born but came of himself (phu long). He also told the people that they would receive the kings, S'iem. So the god who lives here was called u Blei long (he who is out of himself), from which the Europeans gradually made the word Shillong and also gave this name to the splendid mountain station in the heart of the Khasi Mountains.

After the S'iem shŭl has determined exactly the day of the ceremonies, the news of this is sent out two weeks prior to the ceremony to the village elders (Rangbah dkong). This is done on the day of the large market (phu duh), which takes place every eighth day. Two weeks after is the pem dkong, also on the day of the large market, which is discussed below.

The way in which the invitation is issued is interesting. A number of chain about an ell long are made of bamboo rings. These are called k'reah. One of these is sent to the oldest man of each village. Since the Khasi formerly had no script, this bamboo chain always served as a sign of invitation or summons to the S'iem for ceremonies or of danger of war or of court matters and such. The degree of urgency was shown by the form of the links: in the case of great haste the form was length and flat, otherwise correspondingly rounder. The sending of the k'reah to the village elders serves now as a sign of invitation for the whole village to appear at the ceremonies and at the same time as a demand to gather together the prescribed sacrificial gifts. Each of the six divisions, into which the kingdom Nongkrem is divided, must furnish a goat, each individual but must pay a tax (called pynthŭh) of six rupees and four annas in addition. Very poor people only have to pay one anna or even only a half. The

this way the dance continues.

After it has become dark a hen is sacrificed in front of the house of the S'iem *ïing*, to the Ka S'iem synshar (the queen who rules the world) and to the Bishuram, the god who instructs in the playing of flutes and other instruments. Then various drums are beaten.

Then everyone goes inside the *ïing*. The S'iem *ïing* hands the Sah Blei, the first sacrificial priest, who is from the family (jaid) Sumong, a hollowed-out gourd bottle (u shaw) with rice liquor. The Sah Blei pours out the contents in front of the richest Blei in honor of the goddess of the markets (Ka Blei jaw lei hat) so that the markets will be good, remunerative, and successful; so that the roads will be good and safe and everything will be blessed, so that the kingdom itself will progress and develop. It must be remembered here that the market system is very exalted among the Khasi and is the chief source of their income. After this 'visit' the same sacrificial drink is offered to the Ka Blei long S'iem, in order to receive her blessings, so that the kings will be good and may make progress. Music and dancing then lasts until day break.

II. The Sacrificial Feast

The actual ceremony begins on the day of the large market. This day itself is called pan ïiung (great knife). The S'iem *ïing* may not eat rice for three days, only a kind of bread, which is made from rice flour. On the large open place in front of the *ïing* the men hold their sword dance (thad wait) and guns are shot off until the S'iem *ïing*, the S'iem and the Rung-ah (elder) come out of the *ïing*. Following the S'iem *ïing*, is her slave-girl (maw), who carries the utensils and sacrificial gifts. These are arranged by the S'iem *ïing* herself and consist of a banana leaf, of which however only the upper part is taken (ka ka kait), five betel nut leaves (pynpaw), five portions of betel nuts, as much as is usually put in the mouth at one time (pawai) /pàw/, a kind of bread made of rice flour (kpa), for which the rice is first put in water, then taken out, dried, and pounded into flour; then ryndi bread, which is also baked with pounded rice or corn, mixed with sugar and rolled into the shape of ballons, some uncooked, boiled rice (u khaw), a gourd bottle with rice liquor (u khaw) and several leaves of the Khasi oak tree. The following utensils are used: a golden or silver water container (u kaj), a silver dish/like plate (ka pinang rupa). All these are now given by the S'iem *ïing* to the Sah Blei and in addition a rooster and a white fowl are brought to the place

413 manure, and primarily for breeding, since the oxen cannot be dis-
28 pensed with for the cultivation of the fields, especially of the rice fields, where the soaked earth must be trampled to a slimy mush. From the fowl the eggs are particularly prized, since they find an almost daily use in the questioning of oracles in cases of misfortune and sickness. (3) Hens, pigs and goats serve for sacrificial purposes,(4)

3. P.R.T. Gurdon, The Khasis, (London 1907) pp. 221 ff.; Becher, "Das Eierwerfen der Khasi," /Egg throwing Among the Khasi/, Anthropos, Vols. 12-13 (Vienna, 1917-18), pp. 494 ff.; P.F. Stegmüller, "Aus dem religiösen Leben der Khasi" /The Religious Life of the Khasi/ Anthropos Vol. 16-17 (1921-1922), pp. 418 ff.

4. Becher, "Die Neugeern-Feja in den Khasi-Bergen" /The Neugeern Feja in the Khasi Mountains/, Anthropos, Vol. 4, (Vienna, 1909) No. 1-6, pp. 898 ff.; Stegmüller, loc cit.

and they are also a welcome addition to rice at all festive occasions such as arrow shooting, (5) at the name giving, /13/ at weddings,

5. Becher, Im Stammsi etc., /In the Valley, etc./, pp. 298 and 307.

and at the cremation of the dead.

421 Further the various huts belong to the family property, the erec-
613 tion and maintenance of which is the work of the members of the clan, the brothers, nephews, and grandsons. The hut of the clan mother is likewise considered the center of the whole family, and its possession forms the outer sign of the dominance of the clan mother. Here she holds the family sacrifices and also keeps the special treasures. There are considered to be those things which are connected with the religious cult. Special reverence and sacrifice is due the oldest clan mother, as the original founder of the clan, and her brother in each clan family; in addition there are a series of other spirits which vary according to the family clan. The branch of the Khasi people who live in the Jaintia Mountains, the so-called Synteng, have probably pre-
78 served the old Khasi customs the most faithfully. There in the hut of the
18 clan mother are found the following utensils for the service of the divination, who are nearly always feminine: mats, little baskets for rice, gourd bottles, a little basket made of bamboo cane and decorated with feathers, as well as antlers of deer or antelopes. The latter are fastened to the wall; they are supposed to be the seat of the

T: Becker-5 M-4,5 (1910-11) 1974 A87 63:01 A87

divinities of the forest and of the chase. The little basket is attached to a post in the hut; the special divinities of the clan-family are supposed to have their dwelling there; two bamboo twigs fastened underneath symbolize their power. The good bottles are used as containers for the sacrificial drink of rice liquor.(6)

6. Cf. Die Nongkrem-Puja,/The Nongkrem Puja/, loc cit.

As treasures, which are handed down from generation to generation, are considered the rich ornaments of gold and silver, the heavy chains of coral, and the silk scarves, which are worn by the women at dancing ceremonies.

Also those things which the family has certain in the way of furnishings and utensils, such as baskets, mats, looms, shields, arrows and bows, and brass pots for cooking and for water, earthen containers and brass plates are considered common property of the family.

/138/ The clan mother at the time has the entire property in her hands; she is the legal and sole guardian and manager of the property. Nothing can be lent even without her permission. No part of either the movable or immovable family possessions may be sold without her agreement. For the execution of the proper legal deed, as she is often ignorant of writing, she must place her fingerprint. Nothing may ever be given away; that would be an insult to the clan divinity since that would not mean treasuring and honoring their property but giving it away as being of no value. As a punishment for that the clan /Stamm/ would also lose its other possessions and then live in poverty and disgrace. The individual members of the clan could sometimes be recruited for work for other clan-families as a kind of slave (meat). But they may not be taken up in their society as they do not belong to that clan and the clan gods of that family would not permit it. Therefore if, for example, a clan-family has rice fields which they do not cultivate and would gladly give to poorer relatives, they must at least receive the smallest rent as a charge for it. This consists annually of a good bottle of rice liquor, which has the value of about 70 pfennigs to honor the household divinities.

Before the clan mother gives her permission for the sale of common property, she listens to the advice of the other members of the clan. Actually according to the old tribal custom things should be so little sold as given away. It is said that in ages past the original ancestors, when the individual clans numbered as disciples, apportioned out this their needs of field and wood, and these are supposed to form their unsalable clan property (forever). To let it get out of the clan's possession would therefore be insulting the gods. Moreover, that

his wife and children.

5. Holy Forces of Land and Forest

A special kind of land property is still encountered in the Khasi and Jaintia Mountains. These are pieces of land and forests which are considered sang or kynrang, forbidden or holy, thus kyndiet sang, khlaw kynrang, forbidden fields, holy forests. They are also named in connection with the name god, for example, khlaw Blei, forest of the gods, which, to a certain extent, might offer the key to their purpose and meaning. The hands of man are not supposed to disturb this kind of property; this property is sacred to the gods and as the most may be used in their service.

It is not easy to trace the origin and beginnings of these reserves. But several solutions may be found in regard to sections of land. When the /UM/ Catholic mission station was founded in the village of Sohsilla which is located on a steep mountain slope, it was hard to find a place that was halfway suitable and big enough to build even a small dwelling on it. Finally the missionary discovered such a place somewhat outside the village. But then there was a new difficulty. The place was the cremation area for the dead and therefore was sang /taboo/. The spirits of the dead would punish every intruder severely. The people were finally persuaded to burn their dead somewhere else, but it was more difficult to find any who were ready to help with the work of the building. Even those whom the missionary finally persuaded to help still suffered heavily from the fear of the punishment of the gods and continuously one or the other of them had imaginary illnesses.

In the cases of more extensive pieces of land, the male worshippers (thlen), who carry on their dreadful activities in the Khasi Mountains, (6) may offer an explanation sometimes. If such a person is

6. Sir Reverend Jon Brahmaputra, /In the River Valley of the Brahmaputra/, pp. 165,

convicted of murder, which he has committed in the service of the snake god in order to sacrifice the blood of the slain person to him, and if he wishes to free himself from the conviction, he can do nothing other than sell all his movable and immovable property. The latter then becomes sang. Nobody would dare to take over the fields and gardens, to plant anything there, or to touch any fruit on that property. Thus in Cherrapunji a native Catholic was able to take

presentation of the written statement of the chiefain and the village elders that they would have no objection to it. The restrictive nature of the divine land covenant above was despised by all.

As concerns the holy forests, which often extend picturesquely from the highest peak down the slope and are overgrown with gnarled oaks and bright colored rhododendron, no tree may be felled there; at the most, fallen wood or wood torn down by a storm or already rotten wood may be taken. The spirits of the forest, as punishing gods, will revenge every offense. Tigers and leopards, apes, bears, and snakes enjoy an undisturbed existence here. The only case in which wood may be cut in these divine woods is for the religious cremation ceremonies of the dead. It is the custom of the Khasi to set fire often great areas in order to fertilize the ground with the ashes of grasses, trees, and shrubs without regard for the new growth of trees, and to make potato fields there for a year or two or to grow mountain rice, millet, or something similar and then to leave the field fallow again. Thus this is a clever precautionary rule, since there might otherwise be cases when there might be no wood for cremating the dead.

(Continuation follows)

/304/ Family Property and Matrimonial Rights
by C. Becker S.V.D., Wittenberg

Gordon says, (10) that these holy groves were formerly the property

10. The Khasis, p. 87.

of a village. That is not always so as the following case will demonstrate. I am also relating this because it grants us a deeper look into the whole customs of the clan under discussion.

Several decades ago, a Khasi who had become a Protestant, U Jaroh Khasi by name, was employed as a clerk with the English government official in Jowai. In order to secure his family a better living than just his meager salary, he yearned for land. By talk from forgathers in the War territory, he remembered that he could obtain his aim in the neighboring village Nongkai from the family clan Lyngkang. On one day he went thither. After the customary greetings and refreshment with a water pipe and betel nut and conversation about various indifferent matters, he mentioned his desire. "I know," he said in the polite language of even these simple mountain men, "I have the goodness and the good name of your clan 'Nuthin' and the elders

etc. The targets are of two kinds, i.e., a shem, which is made of a bundle of grass about 1 foot long and 4 inches in diameter, the target being fastened on to a pole; and from the root of a plant called *sohpdong*. The distance for the shooting is about 30 to 40 yards. 526

Before the shooting begins, a *sangbnia*, or marksman, performs a *puja* and then the shooting commences. Each archer advances from half to one mile, the total amount so obtained is pooled and then compared against a similar sum subscribed by the other side. Whilst the shooting is going on the men of both sides dance and sing, and when there is a hit a great shout, or *kyrdoi*, is raised. The side that wins the match, after rewarding the *sangbnia* and the man who makes the targets, buys a pig, and some liquor, which articles are partaken of by the people of the village which has won the match. In the War villages, and amongst the Syntengs, sometimes wagers of considerable sums are made to hang upon the issue of these contests.

II. It is not intended to describe at great length the Khasi religious system, but only to note briefly regarding it at present, a full account being reserved for the monograph for the preparation of which I am collecting further information. Khasi religion is animism, or spirit worship. It may be divided into (a) the worship of spirits, (b) ancestor worship. 771

(a) *Spirit worship.*—The principal god amongst the Khasis is God the Creator (U'lai Kingthiaw), who is sometimes masculine and sometimes feminine, the sex of the feminine gender being no doubt due to matriarchal influence. A yearly sacrifice should be offered to this god of a cock and a goat. The cock is sacrificed as a substitute for man, it being thought that the cock, when killed, bears the sins of the man, and that by its sacrifice man will obtain redemption. How the cock came to occupy this important position in Khasi religion is not at present quite clear. Perhaps there was originally human sacrifice amongst the Khasis, and the cock nowadays takes the place of the human victim. Other gods which are worshipped are *Ka'ni kong kor* (the goddess of the rice), *Ka'ni lynnpat* (the goddess of wealth), *U'lai um tray* (god of water). An important fact to be noted is that the Khasi gods or goddesses are never worshipped in the shape of idols in any form whatsoever. 772 • 773

(b) *Ancestor worship.*—I am inclined to think that this form of worship largely embodies the Khasi religious system. The following are some of the ancestors or ancestresses who are regularly worshipped :— 769

(1) *Ka Seidei synrem*,—the primeval ancestress of the family [illegible] A pig is sacrificed to her.

13:Mukherjee E-5 (1954)1958 ART Khasi ART

of a clan some ceremonial attachment developed out of the custom of depositing the bones of the clansmen in clan ossuary and renewing the relationship between the clansmen on the ceremonial occasion of *thymmaiñiuh* when the bones were finally transferred from *mawshieng* (ossuary of a sub-clan) to *mawbah* (ossuary of a clan).

Social bond among the clansmen is due to the performance of common religious ceremonies (*khot*), worship of common deities and spirits of household (*Kmaidwis*), water (*jhuri*) and hills (*Kmaidkum*) and observance of mourning for three days for the death of clansmen with the cessation of outdoor work specially with implements.

Economic bond among them is due further to the possession of common land (*rakhot*), which is divided into separate holdings held by families.

Sub-clan (*Ka-Kpoh*)—Unlike the clan, sub-clan has nothing to do with the regulation of marriage. Its main functions are socio-religious. Mutual interest in the welfare of the members of sub-clan evinced in the observance of *sdaw*[a] in honour of the dead grandmother, profound sentiment grown out of the former practice of depositing the bones of the dead persons of the same sub-clan in *mawshieng* and the responsibility of bearing the expenses for *thymmaiñiuh* bind the members together.

The observance of mourning on the death of a person of the same sub-clan for three days and the consequent

[a] Offering of food to the spirits of the dead ancestors.

also active, and in that decade one U Kyrhai, a Khasi convert to Presbyterianism, left that church and founded a unique sect that blends something of himself with something of mystical Hinduism and Christianity. The competitors who most seriously threatened the dominance of the Welsh Presbyterians were the Roman Catholic missionaries who arrived in Shillong about 1890. Catholics have since opened a number of high schools, colleges, convents, and orphanages. They also established a technical school, and are now constructing a seminary. At the present time, one estimate is that there are about 100,000 Presbyterians and 80,000 Roman Catholics among Khasis. Members of other Christian sects are comparatively few; adherents to Hinduism and Islam are fewer still, comprised chiefly of Khasi women married to Hindu or Muslim men; U Kyrhai's sect is dying out; and the balance of Khasis are, according to their own term, "Khasi" in religion. [Cf. Lyngdoh 1937; Morris 1910; Ropmay 1940; Singh 1960; Pugh 1951.] **Supernaturals.** The great deities are two, an unnamed masculine God (U Blei) and an unnamed feminine Goddess (Ka Blei Nongsynshar Nonghukum). God created the earth, and in the beginning instructed man in cultivation techniques and also laid down the framework of a moral order that should guide his every move if he wished to join God in heaven after death. This framework was then filled in by the first ancestors, who are therefore the authorities on the subject and are semideified as Ka Iawbei (the mother), U Thawlang (the father), and U Suidñia (the mother's brother). Very early, Goddess undertook to keep account of the numbers of human beings on earth, and this role was so important, relating as it did to the health and the multiplication of the people, that she became of major importance in the Khasi pantheon. When sin beset human society, God activated automatic punishments in the form of natural calamities, and man finally decided that some animal should go and intercede with God on behalf of humans. The cock went, agreed to take upon himself the burden of human sin, and received instruction in the correct divinatory and sacrificial techniques for which he would be one of the main objects of the knife. Again, over a period of time, it was the ancestors who perfected these techniques. Now, God is regarded as powerful and merciful, but passive. His punishments have their own impetus, and the expression of His mercy is solidified in ritual. Goddess is more vaguely conceived, but is much closer to the individual. [But cf. Ehrenfels 1950, who conceives of one double-sexed, great deity among Khasis.] Regarding ancestors, it is never clear from prayers whether supplication is to generalized semideities or to particular first ancestors of a Khasi's own matrilineage, and such a distinction seems not to matter. There are three other categories of minor deities: those who protect places (such as villages, groves, or springs),

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household deities, and remedies and smallpox deities. Deities of the first two categories are simply aspects of the high God or Goddess. • The earth is peopled with two great orders of land demons and water demons who cause all undesirable, unnatural, and otherwise inexplicable events, acting either on their own or as instruments in the hands of sorcerers. Apart from omens, both in nature and in dreams, Khasis attach supernatural significance also to myste numbers, and to the colors white, black, and red. They hold especially important folk beliefs regarding betel nut, paddy rice, gold and silver, and clothing. Practitioners. The two classes of religious practitioners are the village or state priests and the sacrificers. Both are male. They use the same divinatory techniques of reading broken eggshells and the entrails of cocks, and they both sacrifice cocks, hens, goats, pigs, and cattle. These skills are not taught to them so much as picked up by observation and reinforced by demonstrations of efficacy. A priest is elected from among the men of his sib to direct his skills to the public good until he dies, and his rewards are institutionalized and come from the village or the state. A sacrificer acts for private persons or kin groups, on call, and is rewarded by them personally with gifts in cash or in kind. The sacrificer is called upon to explain and then to ritually remedy every variety of misfortune, especially illness, though his powers are nowadays regarded with ambivalence, and he is widely expected to become a sorcerer sooner or later. • There are two major types of sorcerer. One is the ritual specialist or sacrificer who secretly turns his skills from good to evil, manipulating demons to injure a person or his group, and acting always for himself alone out of considerations of jealousy or revenge. The other is normally a leading citizen, a woman who is so wealthy and successful that it is believed that she must keep a thlen, i.e. a creature which will bring her prosperity as long as she feeds it periodically with human blood. To provide this blood, the men of her household, or other males whom she bewitches with a special whisky, will indiscriminately murder anyone except a member of her matrilineage. The Jaintias have an analogue to the thlen in their iaw, except that the ultimate result is death from illness rather than murder. Minor witchcraft can be perpetrated by poison keepers or persons with an evil eye, who are often women. Ceremonies. The important traditional ceremonies were the life-crisis rituals relating to pregnancy and childbirth, the naming of a child, and death. Lesser ceremonies related to marriage and divorce, and to housebuilding. All these rituals were addressed primarily to the ancestors, and they are still performed in modified form by many Khasis. Other rituals, which were performed by groups such as villages, sibs, local descent groups, or households, were addressed to the unnamed aspects of the high

There followed the dance of the girls (G *dhol i yathol*) who were also wearing dress as described above. They kept their eyes down, keeping their arms on their sides taking such a short steps with the music, that the movements of the feet were hardly perceptible. The boys were also in their dancing dress as worn by *mangthad* and danced with fly-brush round the girls making their steps with the beatings of the drums. The music started from the morning could be stopped only after completion of the dance which prolonged till evening. These functions served as a good source of amusement to the people, enabling them to have a good diversion from their monotonous life with an opportunity to meet their friends and relatives who assembled there from different parts of the hill.

Discussion

From the *fore*-going description, it is evident that the Khasi law is a democratic set up in which the senior duties are entrusted to the Siem. A different rule is followed in the case of religious festivals. Every Khasi family entrusts the ancestral work of the house to the youngest daughter. The Siem's sister (Siem Sad) being the senior member of his mother's clan, is made responsible for the observance of these ceremonies which concern the welfare of the subjects. The people attend the festival to seek blessings of their supreme deity U Shilling and their presence in the Siem's residence indicates their loyalty to him. The rituals of the festival, chiefly of being performed by her (High Priestess), were conducted by the Chief Priest (Soit bieh) for which he was allotted a very important position in the celebration. The musicians were given similar status owing to the belief in the auspicious of their music. It ought to be played in proper tunes otherwise the displeasure of the deity would fall on them on finding any slight departure in this respect. For this reason, the music is considered as important as the rituals and the role of musicians were consequently given due recognition at every stage of the festival. The tradition of dapping one pattern of Ningrang dkor to worship the goat at the top of the hill was followed on account of the ancestors having carried out in olden times the profession of ubi-lawbah (body guard) to the Siem. Another pattern of khartumma dkor was also asked to carry the head of the sacrificial animal from the hill to the residence of the Siem after the worship, as his predecessors were said in ancient times during the period of their captivity in the Siem. Such incidents were found expressed in a symbolic way through their ceremonies.

The most important concern of the people was to maintain their unity of living together with their property and other means of subsistence. They worshipped him so that he might prevent the evil spirit from doing any harm and may in addition grant them bumper crops. To be the part of such a favour, they appeased their evil U Shilling with gifts and sacrifices. It is not sure whether he is considered as one of their deified ancestors but his important position in the Khasi pantheon enabled him to have some priority in their worship. The offering of red-cock together with a yellow goat, moreover, revealed his amiable and benevolent nature as the malignant ones get representation invariably with black colours. U Shilling was invoked simultaneously with other dead ancestors, with the hope, that all the deities would pool their supernatural strength in fighting the evil spirits before the latter were able to cause any harm to their crops or to reduce in any way the fertility of their fields.

It would be interesting to refer here about the presentation of nine pieces of meat from various parts of the sacrificial animal. It may be a case of appeasement by serving him with some food but there seems to be something

996 magical in such gifts. The Khasi deities being souls of departed members,
982 are anthropomorphic in nature, have all the qualities of an ordinary human
being. The worshippers believe that the deities may also have their strength
789 in course of time which can be augmented only by offering suitable sacrifices.
• 996 They possess power of man to control or make the supernatural
184 "power" which are concentrated or lodged in those regions of the sacrificial
animal, from where they were taken out. It is a case of reciprocal help between the deity and the devotee so that on attaining their mutual strength, they would fulfil their request.

996 The Khasi people while participating in the celebration gave rise to their
789 emotion through their traditional steps. It could not be definitely established
182 whether these were any indication of frightening the evil spirits but on the other hand, these were intended to cheer the hosts, musicians, and the respective units taking parts in the celebration. The musicians on another occasion, were found the other three times on reaching the top of the hill. The
(999) members of the Syiem's house similarly performed a sacred dance round the
(804) fire place of several half-dilleri in the same number of times. This odd number of time seemed to be an auspicious one. The exact cause for such a ceremonial attitude to this figure may be to pay respect to their primal ancestors (*Ka Iawbei*), her husband (*U Thawlang*) and her brother, i.e., five married souls (*U Sudbui*) who are considered highest amongst all the Khasi deities.

996 The dancing is generally taken as secular part of religious function, but the
535 Khasi people considered them (except the last one) as sacred for the reason
182 that it is one of their methods of propitiating their deity. The people at times, ascribe certain meanings to them to rationalise their dancing. The dancing invariably put the participants into ecstasy to enable them to be in communion with their supernatural beings, yet these are interpreted as a device to control the spirits region of its own evil-quiet nature. The people even then enjoyed them with the hope that these would prevent the intruding spirits from spreading diseases. Owing to the fixation of the date of the function at the time of sowing period, the dance of the unmarried girls may have some bearing on the promotion of fertility of the soil. The custom of allowing Khasi boys to dance round the spectators with fly-flap in one of their hands may be to protect them from the influence of the evil spirits.

The heads of the various units adhered to the official precedence strictly before they allowed a common man to take part in the dancing. The custom of allowing two officials to dance, at a time, was in recognition to their equal status. It had become a practice to follow at every stage of their function. The presence of all the in-charge of the township were essential to ensure the blessings of their deity on behalf of his subjects whom they represent in official capacity in this festival. This is a suitable mechanism to foster unity and solidarity among the people of the different units which is the main aim of this celebration. This was found to be so when Khasi people from all parts of State were seen witnessing the dancing of the unmarried girls. The informant on being asked to state the reason of permitting the spectators only to the dance, came out with an interesting fact about the ancient Khasi tradition. The dance used to offer at one time, an opportunity to the youngmen of the Royal families in selecting their brides. A betel leaf with a nut were usually thrown at a girl and the men going round them, remained as witness of this incident. This explanation received some support from the frequent utterances (*ong-ong*) by the public, expressing a desire to run away with a girl dancing with graceful style.

796 The celebrations can be taken up as a solidarity rite. The performance is
182 all the more essential for the purpose of security without which the people